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THE NEW YORKER

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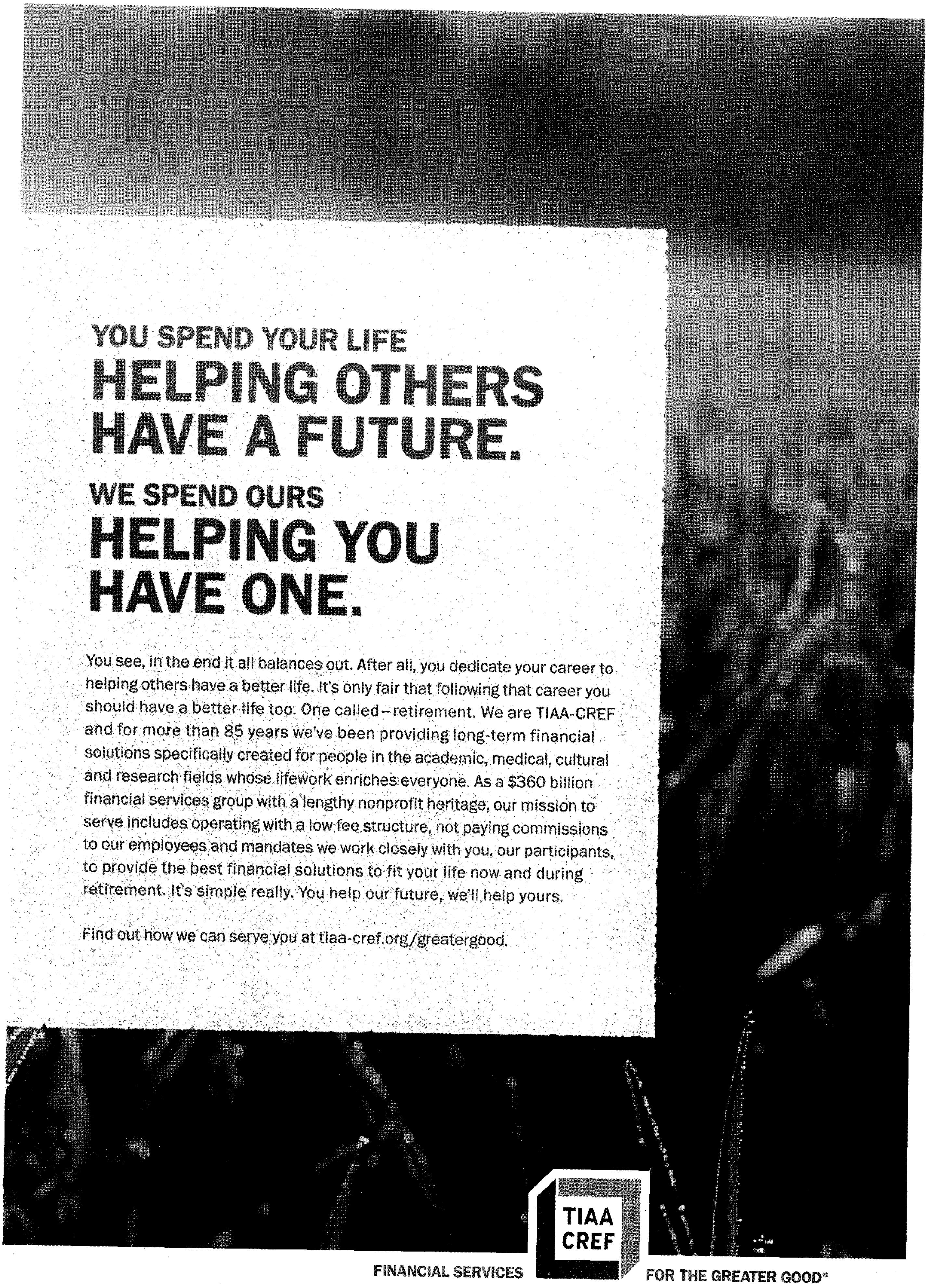

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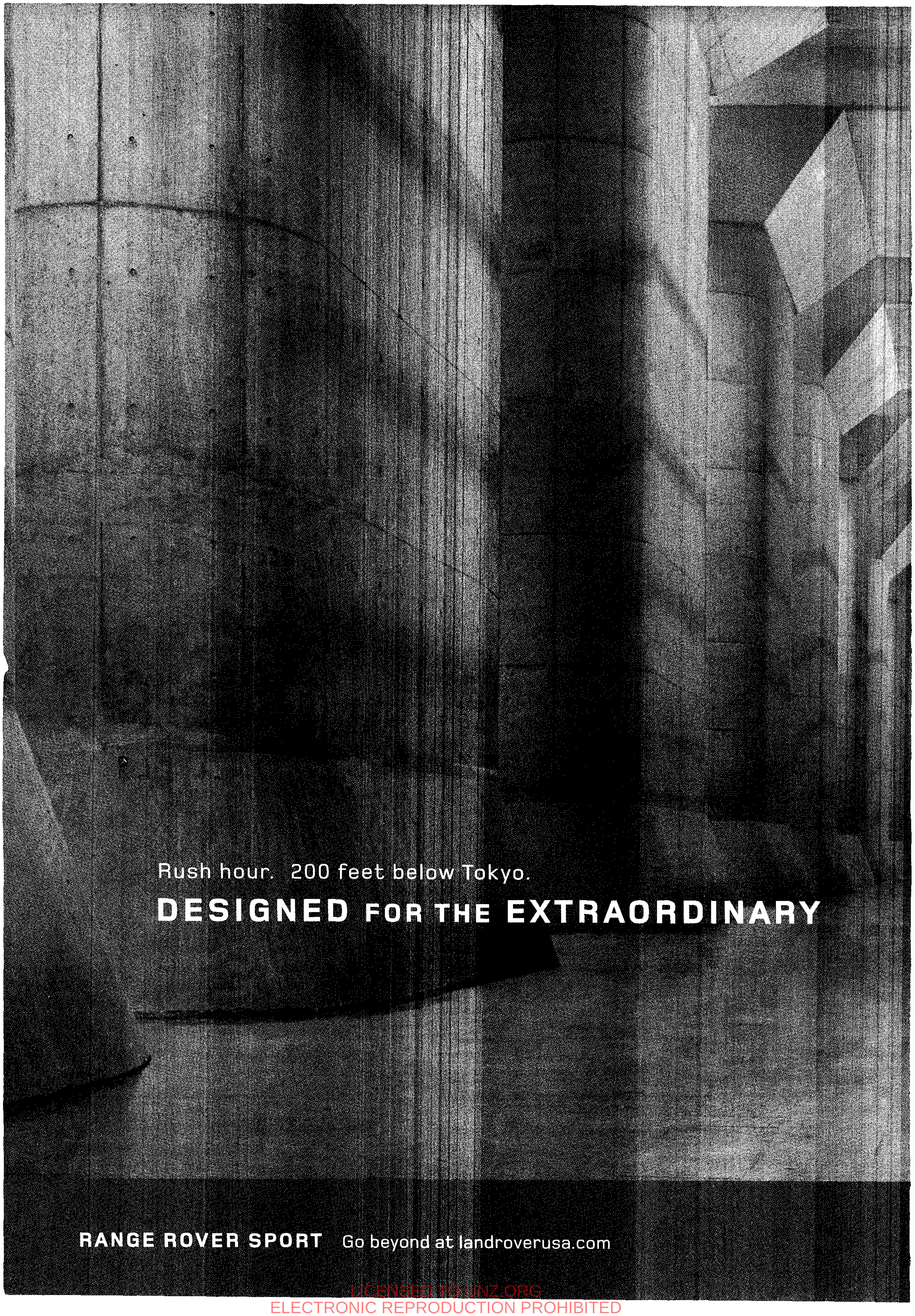
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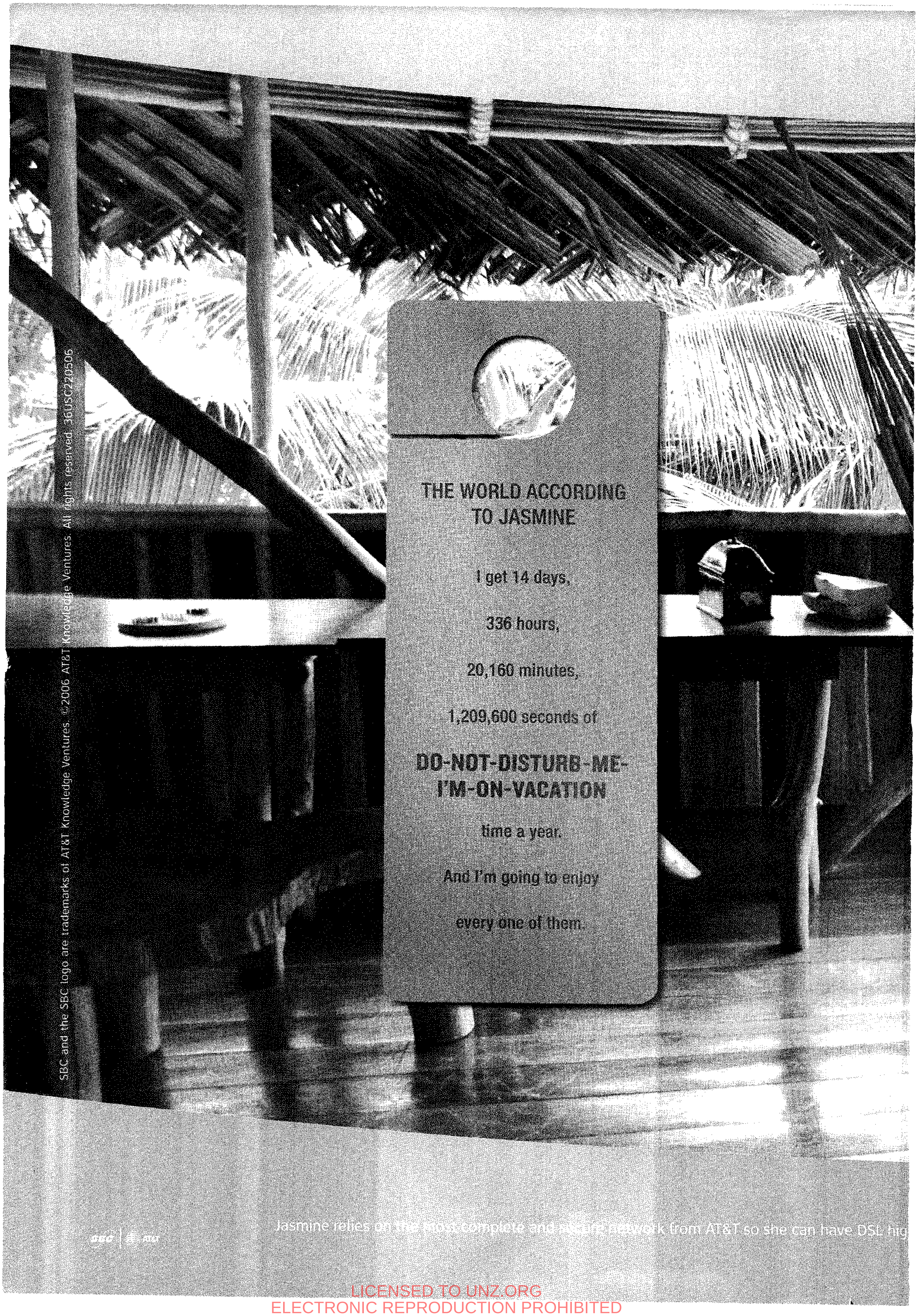

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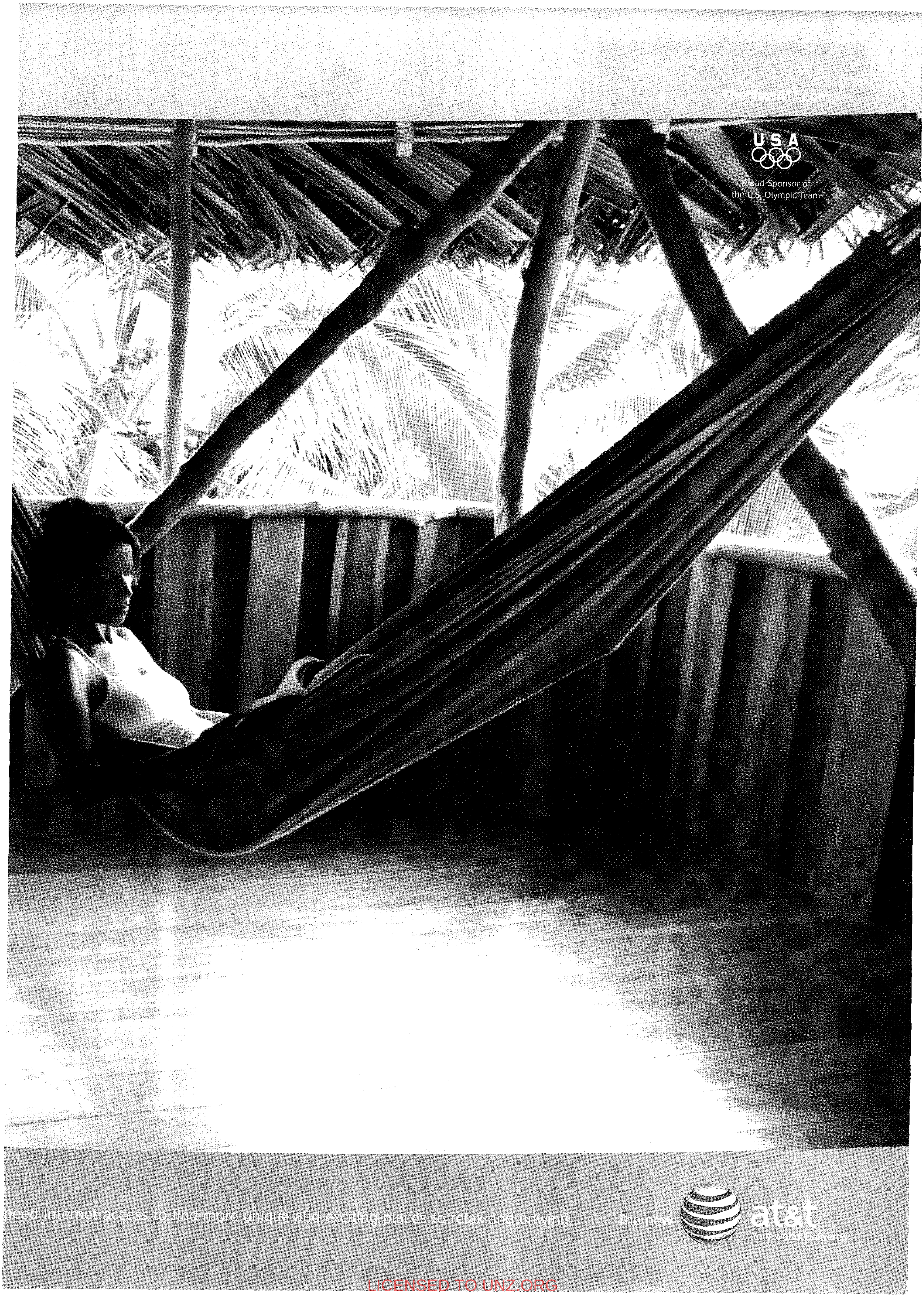TheNewATT.com
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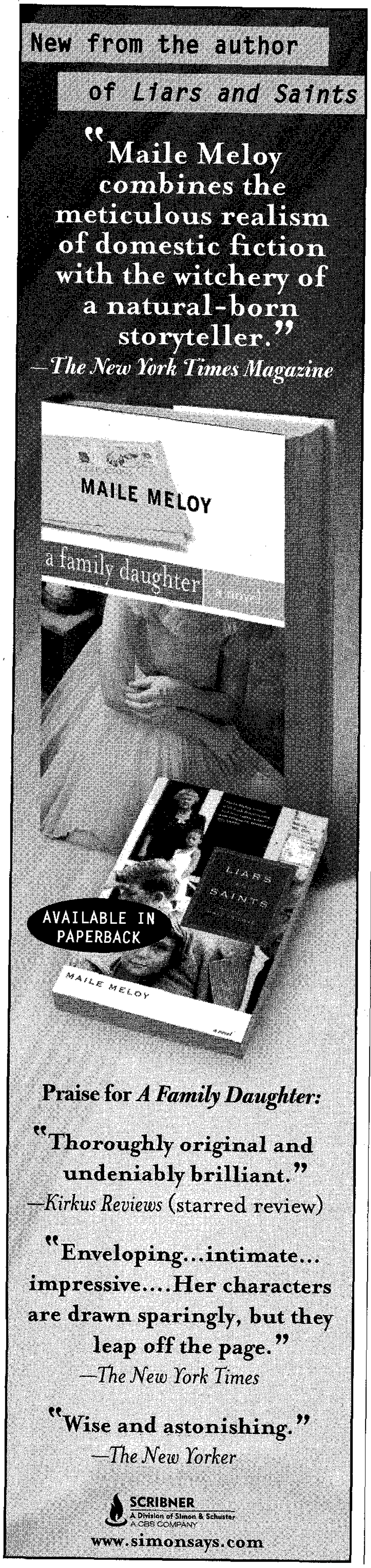

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MARCH 13, 2006

10 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

31 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Hendrik Hertzberg on Cheney's troubles; New Haven cards; Iran's party.

Jack Turner 38 OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS
Green Gold
The new absinthe craze.

Bruce McCall 45 SHOUTS & MURMURS
Official New 7 Wonders of the World Ballot

Calvin Tomkins 46 ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS
How American Is It?
The Whitney rethinks itself, again.

Michael Specter 58 A REPORTER AT LARGE
Political Science
The White House vs. the laboratory.

Janet Malcolm 70 ANNALS OF THE SENATE
The Art of Testifying
The confirmation-hearings show.

Erri De Luca 80 FICTION
"The Trench"

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

Caleb Crain 82 *The Haymarket bombing reëxamined.*
89 Briefly Noted

Peter Schjeldahl 90 THE ART WORLD
Edvard Munch at MOMA.

John Lahr 92 THE THEATRE
"The Lieutenant of Inishmore."

Anthony Lane 95 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things," "Woman Is the Future of Man."

POEMS

Dana Goodyear 54 "Next"
C.K. Williams 64 "Saddening"

COVER *"Three Amigos," by J. J. Sempé* DRAWINGS *Donald Reilly, Robert Mankoff, Barbara Smaller, Michael Crawford, Alex Gregory, Matthew Diffee, Danny Shanahan, Jack Ziegler, Leo Cullum, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Frank Cotham, Tom Cheney, P. C. Vey, Lee Lorenz, Roz Chast, Charles Barsotti, Ariel Molvig* SPOTS *Luke Gray*

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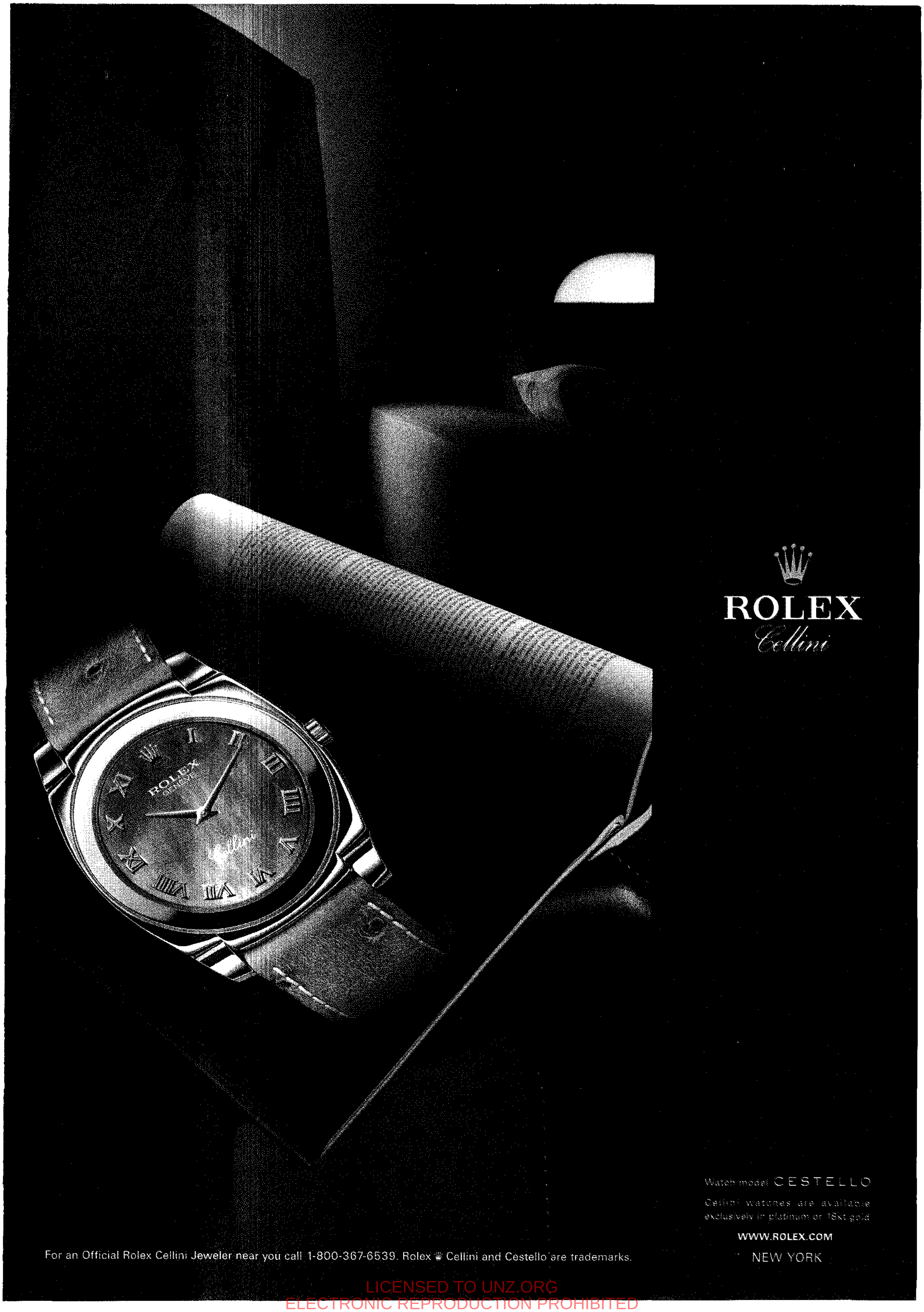

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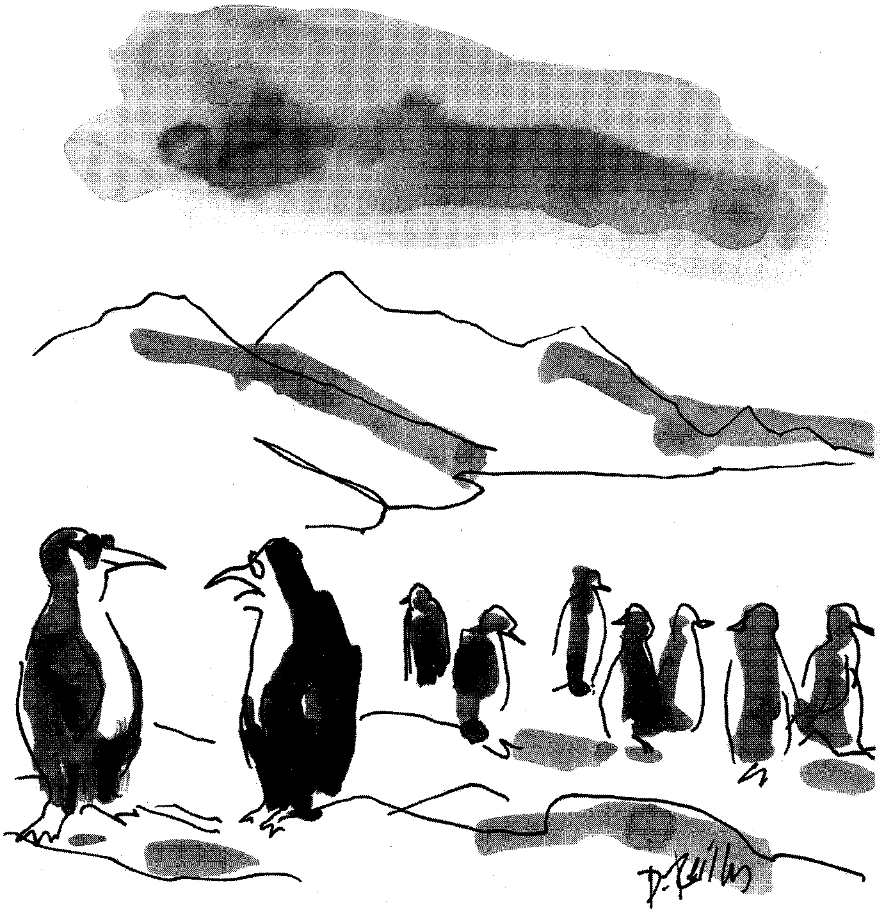
Caleb Crain (Books, p. 82) is the author of "American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation."

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 92) is the magazine's senior theatre critic. ♦



"Oh, get over yourself. We were all in the movie."

THE MAIL

PIT-BULL PROFILES

As the attorney general who introduced the pit-bull ban in Canada's largest province, I agree with Malcolm Gladwell that profiling is a risky practice if applied by governments or the police to human beings ("Troublemakers," February 6th). But pit-bull profiling isn't dangerous at all if a government knows the difference between canines and *Homo sapiens*. Where a pit-bull ban is grandfathered, as in Ontario, the only losers are pit-bull breeders, and the added bonus to public safety is an over-all decrease in dog attacks.
Michael Bryant
Attorney General of Ontario
Toronto, Ontario

Gladwell, in defense of pit bulls, refers to a standardized drill that assesses a dog's character. He writes, "Eighty-four per cent of the pit bulls that have been given the test have passed, which ranks pit bulls ahead of beagles, Airedales, bearded collies, and all but one variety of dachshund." Of course, most people would take a hundred-per-cent chance of being attacked by a dachshund over a sixteen-per-cent chance of being attacked by a pit bull. The primary concern is not whether the animal will behave aggressively but the outcome of such aggressive behavior should it occur. Given that the pit bull has all the attributes needed to make it a lethal weapon when it does choose to attack, it is understandable that people want to ban this animal from their communities.
Tony Foley
New York City

Like many readers, I usually enjoy it when Gladwell takes a theory in one field and molds it to fit something entirely unrelated. Unfortunately, anyone who has had a frightening encounter with a dog would disagree with the syllogism he tries to make in this piece. Frederick Schauer, the Harvard law professor quoted too briefly in the piece, worried about the question of pit bulls and whether it was fair to generalize about them. In his 2003 book, "Profiles, Probabilities, and Stereotypes," he argued against "the expansion of the moral rhetoric of antidiscrimination into the world of dogs." I live down the block from a Rottweiler with a hair-trigger temper and his kennel mate, which appears to be a pit bull. Sometimes they escape and wander through the yard where my young children play. I would gladly rid my neighborhood of these dogs immediately, rather than wait for the certifiable bad behavior that would meet Gladwell's criteria.
Peter Wayner
Baltimore, Md.

TAXING CONSERVATION

Hendrik Hertzberg writes, in his column on the President's State of the Union address, "The best way to encourage conservation . . . would be imposing a hefty gasoline tax and raising mandatory fuel-efficiency standards" (Comment, February 13th & 20th). I have long depended on Hertzberg's sane voice to get me through these parlous times, but I must disagree with this suggestion. A gasoline-tax increase would have little significant impact on the wealthy but would greatly harm the less comfortable, who are also often the ones forced to live the farthest from their jobs and in neighborhoods underserved by public transportation. Even with a rebate or a tax credit to offset the increase, as some have suggested, in the indeterminate short term these people would pay twice: once at the gas pump and again for goods that have been price-inflated because of the increased cost of transportation.
Marcy Stricker
Pittsburgh, Pa.

•

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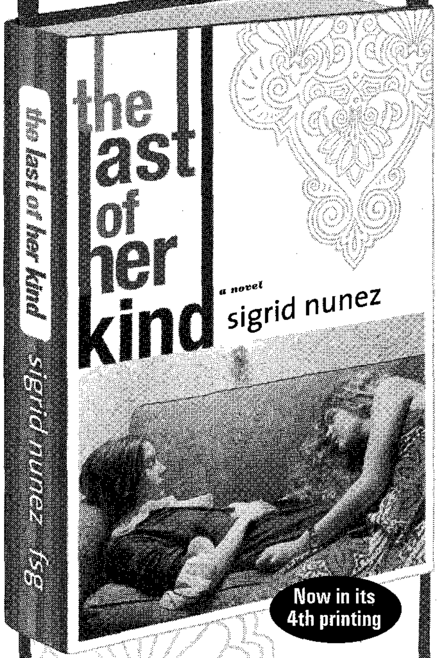

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The artist Pierre Huyghe, shooting a film, now in the Whitney Biennial. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
12	13	14	8	9	10	11

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
GENDER BENDER

The Public Theatre premières David Grimm's bawdy new play, "Measure for Pleasure." The sex farce features an ensemble of gender-confused romantics, including Lady Vanity (Suzanne Bertish) and Sir Peter Lustforth (Wayne Knight, of "Seinfeld"). (See page 12.)

NIGHT LIFE
POST-CELLO

Isobel Campbell, a wispy vocalist who used to play cello for Belle and Sebastian, recently recorded a dark and powerful album of duets with the ex-Screaming Trees front man, Mark Lanegan. Campbell visits Joe's Pub this week, with the equally sturdy singer Eugene Kelly, formerly of the Vaselines, in tow. (See page 15.)

ART
DREAMSCAPES

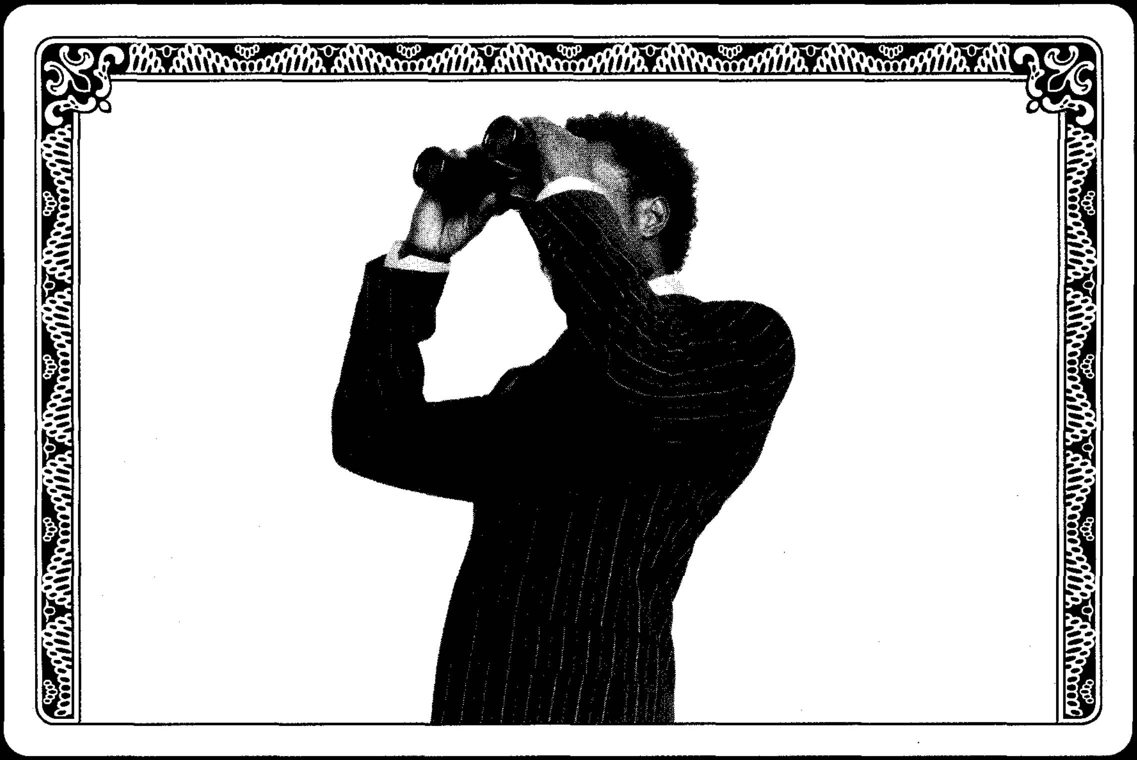
The British landscape painter Samuel Palmer (1805-81) tried in his early career to paint visions of what paradise might be; these efforts, along with the work of William Blake, became touchstones for the Surrealists in the nineteen-thirties. The British Museum and the Met have collaborated on a Palmer retrospective, the first in eighty years, that reviews his career from the early Edenic scenes to more classical later work. (See page 16.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
THE ENTERTAINER

"Treemonisha," the sole surviving opera by the ragtime genius Scott Joplin, was completed in 1910 and takes place on an Arkansas plantation in the eighteen-eighties. The show receives a rare performance, by the Collegiate Chorale (and various soloists) at Alice Tully Hall. (See page 21.)

MOVIES
NORTHERN LIGHTS

The Museum of Modern Art is screening a series of films related to its Edvard Munch retrospective, including Peter Watkins's magisterial dramatization of the painter's life, "Edvard Munch," Henning Carlsen's fierce version of Knut Hamsun's "Hunger," Alf Sjöberg's adaptation of Strindberg's "Miss Julie," from 1951, and home movies made by Munch himself. (See page 27.)



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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THE EMPEROR JONES
The Wooster Group's production of Eugene O'Neill's 1920 play. In previews. Opens March 11. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE
Alec Baldwin stars in a revival of Joe Orton's play, in which a saucy landlady and her brother fall for the same man. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

FAMILY SECRETS
A one-woman show written and performed by Sherry Glaser, about a Jewish family from the Bronx that has relocated to California. Bob Balaban directs. Opens March 8. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

GEORGE M. COHAN TONIGHT!
Jon Peterson stars in this musical about the Broadway legend. In previews. Opens March 9. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS
Gordon Greenberg directs this revival of the 1968 musical celebrating the Belgian composer. In previews. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

MEASURE FOR PLEASURE
A new comedy by David Grimm, about a transvestite prostitute, at the Public. Opens March 8. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

POINTS OF DEPARTURE
The Intar season continues with a thriller by Michael John Garcés, about a Central American man returning to his home country after having assimilated in the U.S. In previews. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

RING OF FIRE, THE JOHNNY CASH MUSICAL SHOW
The stories of the songs of Johnny Cash are portrayed in a new musical directed by Richard Maltby, Jr. In previews. Opens March 12. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

SAVAGES
Chris Jorie directs this play by Anne Nelson ("The Guys"), about war and its consequences. In previews. Opens March 9. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SIDD
A new musical inspired by "Siddhartha," the Hermann Hesse classic about a man's wanderings toward enlightenment. In previews. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

TRIAL BY WATER
Qui Nguyen's play about two Vietnamese brothers who escape their home to seek a better life. Previews begin March 14. (45 Below, 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101.)

WELL
Lisa Kron's comedy, which makes its Broadway début after a successful run at the Public in 2004, explores the conventional wisdom of wellness. Leigh Silverman directs. Previews begin March 10. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

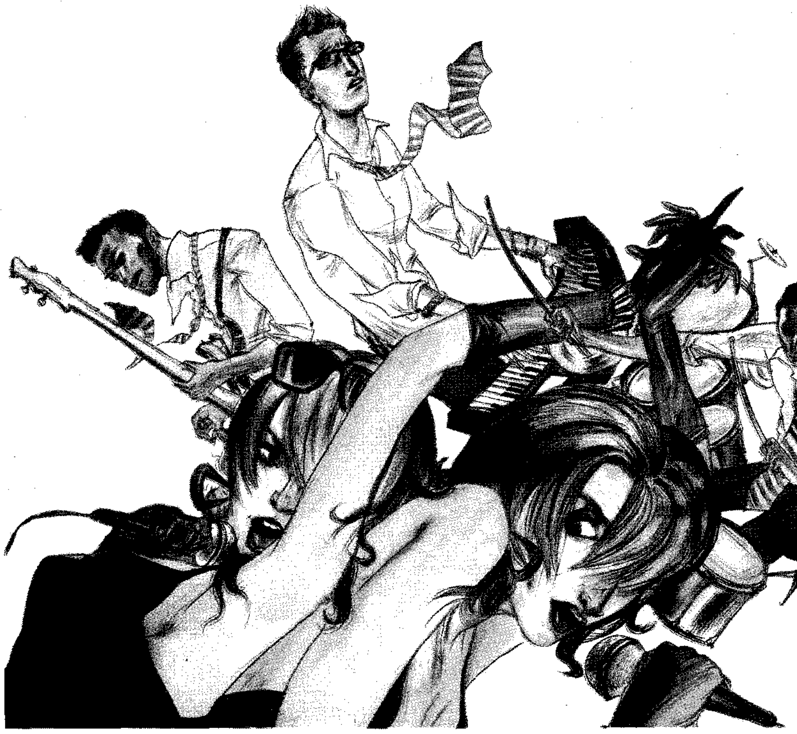
NOW PLAYING

ACTS OF MERCY: PASSION-PLAY
In a new drama by Michael John Garcés, the impending death of their patriarch haunts two Cuban-American half-brothers, who divert themselves with a night of aggressive misbehavior and wayward liaisons. The play's structure shadows the fourteen stations of the cross in a Passion play, and each scene has the title of a Christian virtue—"harbor to the houseless," "instruction of the ignorant"—indicating the vein of compassion that runs through the brothers' misadventures. Garcés's volatile, rapid-fire dialogue is at times inorganic but always absorbing, and, though the scenes are nearly overburdened with subtext, the director, Gia Forakis, lends each one a delicate hand. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Through March 12.)

BERNARDA ALBA
Phylicia Rashad stars in a new musical by Michael John LaChiusa, in which the strong will of a recent widow is subverted by her rebellious daughters. Choreographed and directed by Graciela Daniele. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

CLEAN ALTERNATIVES
An eco-friendly family does battle with corporate big business, in a comedy by Brian Dykstra. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through March 12.)

DEFIANCE
John Patrick Shanley's schematic follow-up to the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Doubt" is a lecture on moral courage disguised as a play. Set on a Southern Marine base in 1971, a vainglorious commander who wants "one shining, clean achievement" before he retires resolves to handle incidents of racial insubordination by promoting an apolitical African-American as his executive officer. However, while trying to tackle racism in off-base housing, the commander has an affair with the wife of a recruit, which is conduct unbecoming and means the end of his career. The chaplain passes the buck to the executive officer. The executive officer won't brush it under the table. The result: an arid, theatrically inert exercise in bogus eloquence. (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)



The art-pop ensemble the Fabulous Entourage plays the Whitney Museum.

MU PAN

FATBOY
The winner of the Fringe First Award, this absurdist comedy by John Clancy skewers the American tendency toward gluttony. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

GREY GARDENS
The cult film by the Maysles brothers about two Bouvier women living in a dilapidated Hamptons manse has been adapted into a musical, starring Christine Ebersole and Mary Louise Wilson. Directed by Michael Greif. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HEDDA GABLER
Cate Blanchett and Hugo Weaving star in a Sydney Theatre Company production of Ibsen's classic play. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE
An Atlantic Theatre Company presentation of a black comedy by Martin McDonagh ("The Pillowman"). (Reviewed in this issue.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
The Pearl presents Shakespeare's dark comedy, directed by Beatrice Terry. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

THE MUSIC TEACHER
The New Group presents a new play by Wallace Shawn, about a young teacher who creates an opera with his protégée. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

THE PAJAMA GAME
The Roundabout's revival of Adler and Ross's 1954 musical (deftly directed and choreographed by Kathleen Marshall, at the American Airlines) outshines the original in both its production values and its male lead, Harry Connick, Jr., who is making his Broadway début. He has the confidence of talent—and the sex appeal that comes with it. Here, when boy meets girl there is credible chemistry, and his voice is particularly well suited to the clever score. Connick and the excellent Kelli O'Hara, who, as Babe, has an ingénue's sweet face and a svelte body that tells a different story, make sparks fly off the lusty paean to love, and the show's fizz and flow never falter. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/6/06.) (227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

PHENOMENON
Nerve Ensemble's dance-theatre piece depicts life at the foot of Mt. St. Helens in 1980, the day before it erupted. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

RETZACH
Capturing the essence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a stage is difficult; we've all witnessed scenes on the evening news that would leave Sophocles tongue-tied with shame. Shauna Kanter directs this 1997 work by the Israeli playwright Hanoch Levin, oscillating between naturalism and expressionism in her portrayal of a father's quest for vengeance against the soldiers who murdered his son. In spite of admirable intentions, both the acting and the English translation (credited to Kanter, Liat Glick, and Tzahi Moskovitz) come off awkwardly, leaving one guessing how much of the fault lies with the original play and how much with its current interpretation. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through March 12.)

THE SEVEN
In Will Power's hip-hop adaptation of Aeschylus' "Seven Against Thebes" (developed and crisply directed by Jo Bonney, at the New York Theatre Workshop), the story is a tale spun by a d.j. (the perky Amber Efé). The cursed sons of a gold-chained and velvet-suited Oedipus (the swinging Edwin Lee Gibson)—Eteocles (Ma-

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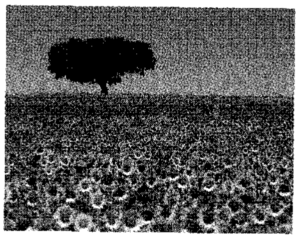

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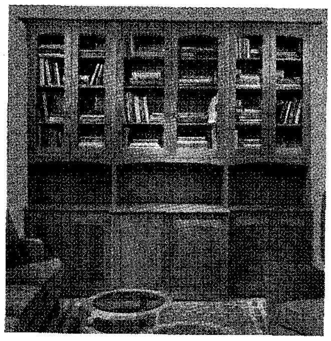

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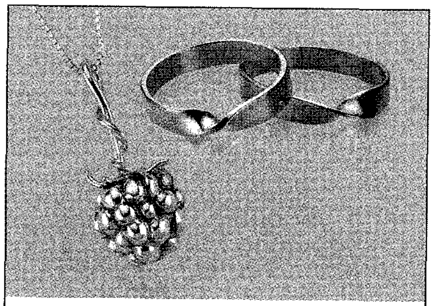

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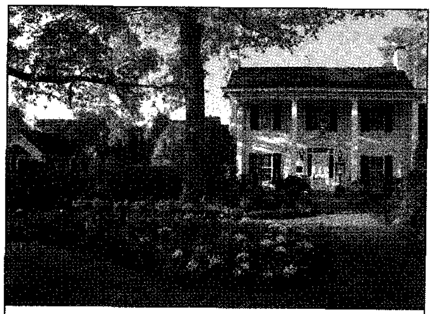

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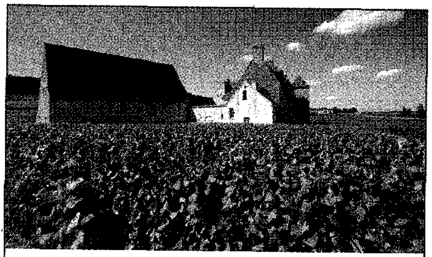

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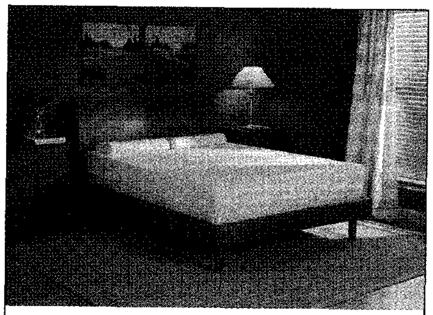

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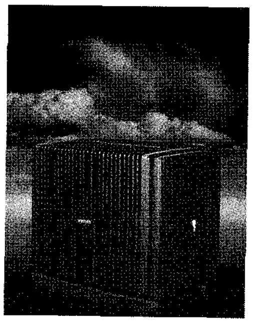

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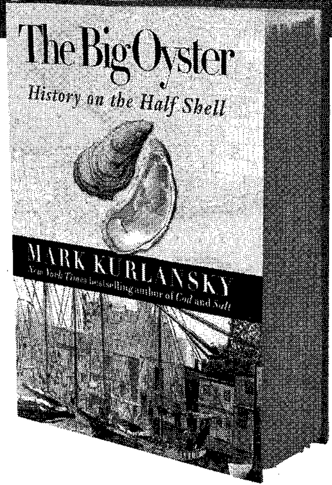

The Big Oyster

History on the Half Shell

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nuel Herrera) and Polynices (Jamyl Dobson)—cut a deal to share power over Thebes. They quarrel. They fight. They die. The funky Fates and the doo-wop chorus are organized into a series of clever tableaux by Bill T. Jones, but the play never quite achieves sufficient verbal or visual lustre. Still, Power's intelligence and his wordplay are disarming. (3/6/06) (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through March 12.)

SOLDIER'S WIFE
This revival makes a good case for revisiting this quick-witted work, an examination of a middle-class marriage reeling from the pressures of wartime and new-found celebrity. The playwright Rose Franken's heroine, Kate (Angela Pierce), has penned dozens of love letters to her husband, John (Michael Polak), while he was serving abroad. Upon his return home, John has a surprise for Kate: her intimate missives are to be published in book form. The volume's instant success turns Kate into a celebrity purveyor of womanly devotion, threatening the marriage that is her truest expression. Under Eleanor Reissa's direction, this astutely sentimental period piece deserves its second life. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

[TITLE OF SHOW]
Three weeks before the application deadline for the 2004 New York Musical Theatre Festival, Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell dared themselves to write a musical about their rush to come up with a submission. The result is neither a postmodern landmark nor a party-game trifle but a wittily observed X-ray of musical-comedy conventions, acted by a sardonic and immensely likable cast (Susan Blackwell, Heidi Blickenstaff, and the two creators). The jokes are decidedly inside (a working knowledge of the musical "Into the Woods" is essential), but all the shop talk will leave show lovers in stitches. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

TRANSATLANTIC LIAISON
Simone de Beauvoir's affair with Nelson Algren is the subject of this new play by Fabrice Rozié. Directed by John McLean. (Harold Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Also Playing

ABIGAIL'S PARTY: Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BRIDGE & TUNNEL:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FANNY HILL:** St. Peter's Theatre, 54th St. east of Lexington Ave. 212-868-4444. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **I LOVE YOU BECAUSE:** Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. **INDOOR/OUTDOOR:** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **RABBIT HOLE:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE WOODEN BREEKS:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. Through March 11. **ZOMBOID! (FILM/PERFORMANCE PROJECT #1):** St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-352-3101.

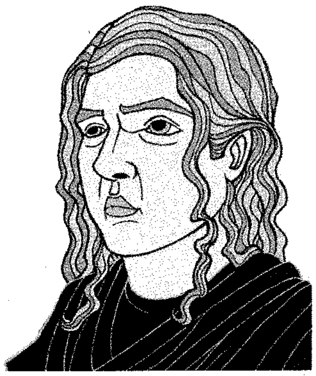
NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 9: The **Commitments**, a soul ensemble with roots in the 1991 Alan Parker film of the same name. March 12: The blues-harmonica master **James Cotton**.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
QUEEN FOR A DAY

The most monumental role that Mark Morris ever created was the double role of Dido and her sworn foe, the Sorceress, in his 1989 version of Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas." And he made it for himself. From scene to scene—he ran offstage, let his hair down, and ran back on—he changed from the carved-in-stone queen to the wild, obscene witch. Actually, his first idea was to take all the roles in the opera: not just Dido and the Sorceress but also Dido's lover, Aeneas, and the lead courtiers, and the chorus. The opera would be a solo. In the end, he confined himself to the two leads. Now, at age forty-nine, he is giving up the leads and, in the process, splitting them. In his twenty-fifth-anniversary season, starting this week at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the grand-legged Amber Darragh will be Dido; the maenadic Bradon McDonald, the Sorceress. Is Morris sorry? "No, I'm very happy," he says. "They do it great. I cry in rehearsal, but that's just because it's such a sad dance." The season will include three programs, with nine pieces, old and new.



JASON GREENBERG

—*Joan Acocella*

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—March 9-11 and March 13-14: Signs of spring can be hard to spot on the streets of New York, but one sure indication that warmer weather is on the way is the arrival of the **Allman Brothers.** The Southern rockers start their fourteen-night stand this week. (Through March 26.)

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 8: The **Wedding Present,** the prototypical British indie-rock band of the eighties and nineties, specialized in frantic guitars and songs about relationships in turmoil. Centered on the vocalist and guitarist David Gedge, the band went through a series of lineup changes before going on hiatus at the tail end of the last decade. Gedge went on to concentrate on a more pop-oriented project, Cinerama, with his girlfriend, Sally Murrell. That was nice while it lasted, but last year Gedge revived the Wedding Present shortly after breaking up with her. March 10: The **Hellacopters,** the **Datsuns,** and **Nebula** may hail from disparate points on the globe (Sweden, New Zealand, and California, respectively), but they share a love of tight trousers, long hair, and rollicking garage rock.

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-982-4052)—Despite their name, the **Slackers** are a hardworking band. The cream of New York City's somewhat insular neo-ska scene, they were inspired by second-wave ska bands like the Specials and Madness. Over the course of their sixteen-year career, they've added elements of jazz and big-band swing to their sound. They're here March 10-11, celebrating the release of their new album, "Peculiar."

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 9: From the sunny climate of Orange County, California, comes **Bleeding Through.** This quartet of scowling young men plays a deliberately inaccessible genre called grindcore, which wallows in violent depravity (some choice song titles include "Love Lost in a Hail of Gunfire" and "Mutilation").

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 13: **Isobel Campbell,** a gauze-voiced singer who used to be in Belle and Sebastian, recently released "Ballad of the Broken Seas," a haunting album with Mark Lanegan, the erstwhile Screaming Trees vocalist. The album, which includes covers of "Ramblin' Man" and "St. James Infirmary," as well as meandering originals by Campbell, was a long-distance affair. The two recorded it in separate locations (Scotland and L.A.); for this show, Campbell is appearing with **Eugene Kelly,** formerly of the Edinburgh group the Vaselines, which was a favorite of Kurt Cobain.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—**Kelley Polar,** a classically trained violinist with a penchant for electronic music who has arranged the string sections for the dance-music outfit Metro Area, recently released his own ambitious New Age disco record, "Love Songs of the Hanging Gardens." On March 8, he performs the songs live for the first time.

"LET'S ZYDECO"
The roving concert series dedicated to the indigenous music of Louisiana sets down at Connolly's, an Irish pub in midtown with a fine wooden dance floor. **Leroy Thomas** and the Zydeco Roadrunners perform on March 12. (121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

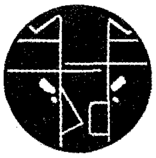
NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—March 9: The sibling-powered Brooklyn post-punk trio the **Rogers Sisters** lets rip songs from its new album, "The Invisible Deck."

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—March 10: The singer and guitarist **Rob Dickinson** plays soaring, atmospheric rock along the lines of his former band, the Catherine Wheel.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—March 9: The ever-evolving cabaret punk of Brooklyn's **Barbez.** March 10: **Mi and L'au,** a Finnish former model and a French composer, respectively. A few months after meeting in Paris in 2001, the two left the city and moved to a cabin in the woods in Finland. They spent a year and a half writing songs for their self-titled début album, and their spare acoustic music is, in its own way, romantically adventurous. March 12: The Turin-based minimalist-rock quartet **Larsen** pays a rare visit. Led by the captivating Fabrizio Palumbo, an experimental guitarist with a penchant for ambient sounds, Larsen makes music that shifts seamlessly from a spare accordion- or xylophone-filled moment to a more punishing one, with precise and heavy drumming. The effect is reminiscent of the Swans, the former band led by the album's producer, Michael Gira. Also on the bill is the transgendered accordion wunderkind **Baby Dee.**

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—March 8: The local favorites **Nada Surf.** With the shimmering and mellow sixties-style indie pop of **Rogue Wave.** March 13-15: The English singer and Kosovo war veteran **James Blunt** delivers swooning ballads that spill over with declarations of unrequited love.

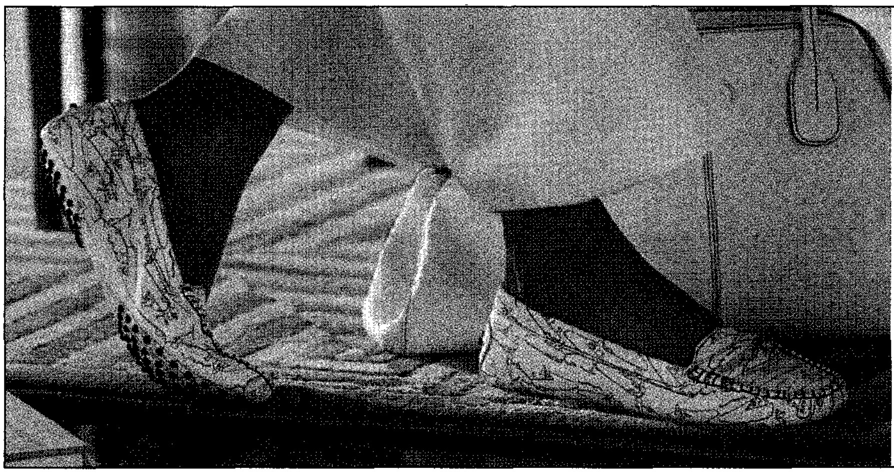
DVD NOTES
HISTORY LESSONS



In 1939, as Hitler's war engulfed Europe, John Ford made "**Young Mr. Lincoln**" (now in a fine transfer from Criterion), an instantly mythic exaltation of a reluctant yet courageous leader who stood up to a violent mob. Henry Fonda displays an uncanny blend of prosthetic makeup and spiritual affinity as the beardless, self-taught lawyer who sets up shop in Springfield, Illinois, in 1837, and takes the case of two farm boys falsely accused of murder—but first must save them from being lynched by the riled-up townsfolk. Ford's Lincoln—who understood law mainly as a matter of "right and wrong"—faces down the posse at the jailhouse door with a blend of bravado and rhetoric, then displays his moral genius in the courtroom, where the defendants are threatened with a legal hanging. Yet even at the moment of his triumph, Lincoln is tragically alone as he surveys with skeptical dismay the same cheering crowd that had so recently shouted for blood. Rising above the masses in physical and spiritual stature, Lincoln, in Ford's view, was haunted by the readiness of ordinary men to acquiesce in the evil that appears in the film as ubiquitous and as natural as bad weather.

Though often mistaken for a reserved realist, Eric Rohmer, born in 1920, is a repressed Surrealist, and the mad energies at work beneath his films' smooth surfaces are on view in his "**Triple Agent**" (Koch Lorber), from 2004, a drama set in the Russian-émigré milieu of nineteen-thirties Paris. In a story inspired by real events, Fyodor Voronin (Serge Renko), an anti-Bolshevik general in exile, uses a charitable organization as a front for a dangerous game of political deception among Communists, Nazis, and French officials. Through the power of words alone—the conflicting rumors that he spreads in drawing rooms and cafés where journalists, diplomats, and spies crossed paths—Voronin builds a one-man empire of intrigue that collapses along with the French regime that sheltered it. Rohmer, recalling his teen-age years, punctuates the film with newsreel footage of bomb attacks and pacifist rallies to suggest the inadequate French response to Hitler's and Stalin's encroaching tyrannies, which he presents as two faces of the same offscreen monster.

—*Richard Brody*



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WHITNEY MUSEUM
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—March 10: The local theatrical glam-rock group the **Fabulous Entourage** plays the temple of the American art scene during its season of High Holy Day services, the Biennial. The group, which is led by the keyboardist Kyle Jarrow, includes a bass player, a drummer, and two female vocalists who wouldn't be caught at a show without a platinum (or red, or green) wig. This show features a slate of new costumes and an installation by the artist Rob Roth, who has made videos for Debbie Harry, Hole, and others.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 10: The sitar master **Nishat Khan.** (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall.) March 11: A night of fado with **Cristina Branco.** (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl., at Washington Sq. S. For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7563.)

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—March 11: The Canadian singer-songwriter **Jane Siberry** is a staunchly independent musician. She has a sharp eye, a compelling voice, and a brave heart—she runs her own record label and leaves it up to the fans to determine what they want to pay for her songs.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—March 8-11: Last year, the saxophonist **Joe Lovano** released the album "Joyous Encounter," which saluted the late Thad Jones, but don't expect Lovano to stick solely with that undervalued composer. Lovano has a knack for the unexpected, and his quartets move in virtually any direction from free-form jazz to unadulterated bebop.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—March 7-12: While the majority of jazz pianists make occasional visits to the edge, peer over, and then scurry back to safety, **Ahmad Jamal** lives there. With stream-of-consciousness logic, he reorchestrates conventional tunes, fracturing rhythms and harmonies with gleeful abandon.

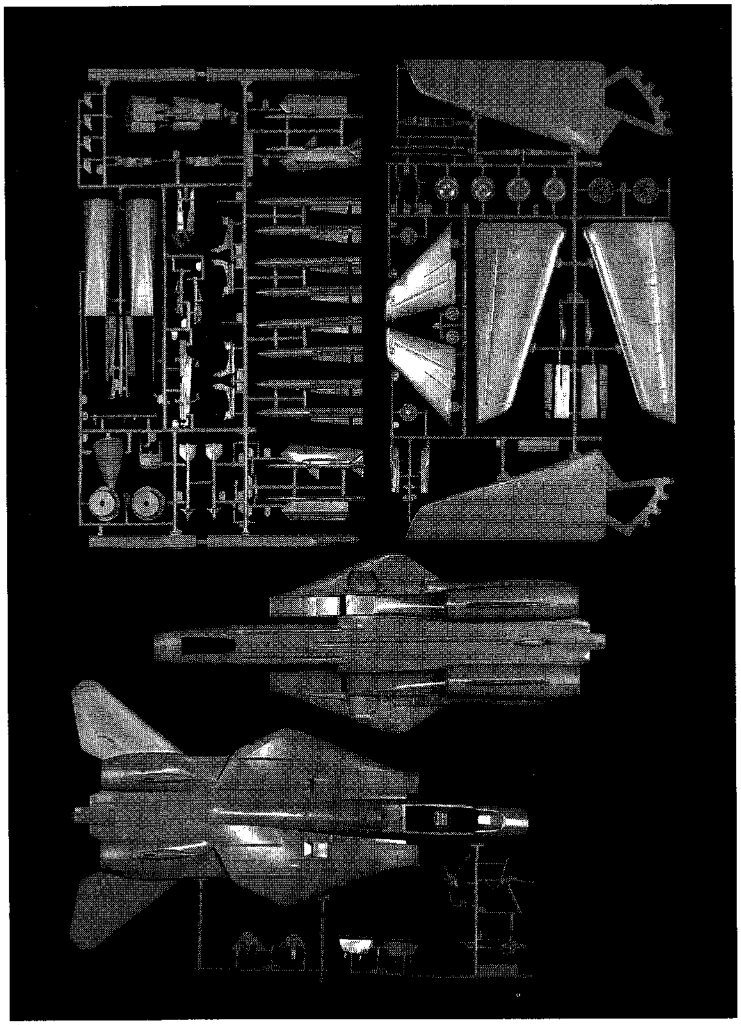
DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—The late-fifties combo co-led by the trumpeter Donald Byrd and the incomparable baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams was a muscular hard-bop unit that never got the wider recognition it deserved. The trumpeter **Jeremy Pelt** and the baritone master **Gary Smulyan** look to remedy that situation March 7-12.

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
Three pianists with not much to link them but high style come together for a night. **Barbara Carroll,** who will no doubt add her subtle vocalizing to the mix, and **Eric Reed** bring trios, while **Junior Mance** goes it alone. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. March 9.)

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—March 8-12: The saxophonist **James Carter** finds his perfect forum in a sleek organ trio. He's a loquacious player who loves to roar over a bluesy backbeat. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Philadelphia nurtured its share of jazz legends, John Coltrane and Jimmy Smith among them. Living masters from the City of Brotherly Love, including **Jimmy Heath** and his brother **Albert (Tootie) Heath, Pat Martino,** and **Buster Williams** join such younger players as **Joey DeFrancesco** and **Duane Eubanks** in the Rose Theatre for a salute to a once fecund jazz town.

"TO PREZ WITH LOVE"
Players of all sorts turn out for the annual Lester Young Memorial Celebration, including **Hank Jones, Billy Taylor, Don Byron, Dick Katz,** and **Benny Powell.** (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-935-2200. March 12.)



"War Models," a show of photographs by William Laven, opens at Foley.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—March 7-12: The **Wallace Roney Group.** Miles Davis informs nearly every note that Roney plays, but recently this ambitious trumpeter has been formulating his own synthesis of straight-ahead jazz, fusion, and hip-hop. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

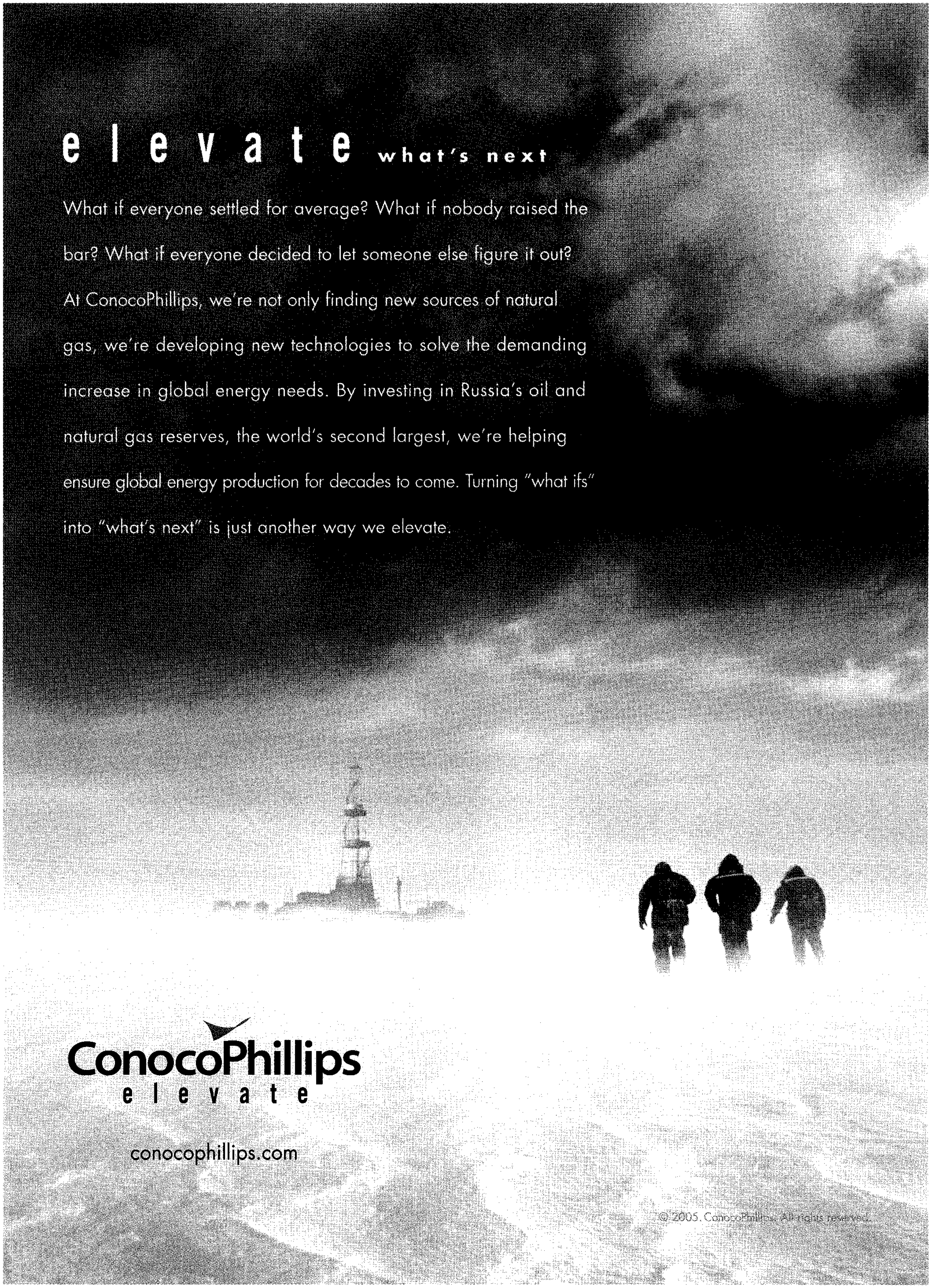
ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Robert Rauschenberg: Combines."** A majestic, exhilarating show of painting-sculpture hybrids dating from the fifties and early sixties. Through April 2. ♦ **"Samuel Palmer (1805-1881): Vision and Landscape."** A major retrospective, co-organized with the British Museum, reviews the work of the Romantic-era landscape painter. Opens March 7. ♦ **"Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Emperor Akbar's Illustrated 'Khamsa,' 1597-98."** Manuscripts of the Sufi poet Amir Khusrau Dihlavi's five-tale "Khamsa," currently unbound for conservation, are illustrated with vibrant landscapes, theatrical figures, and intricately drawn *shamsa* rosettes, best seen through a magnifying glass. Through March 12. ♦ **"A Taste for Opulence: Sèvres Porcelain from the Collection."** Through Aug. 13. ♦ **"The Fabric of Life: Ikat Textiles of Indonesia."** Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Take Two. Worlds and Views: Contemporary Art from the Collection"** has filled the second-floor contemporary galleries for several months, but the selection is now about to turn over. This will be the last chance for a while to see these works, which include Dana Schutz's ten-by-fourteen-foot painting "Presentation" (2005) and Janet Cardiff's awe-inspiring audio piece "40 Part Motet. A Reworking of *Spem in Alium* by Thomas Tallis." Through March 21. ♦ The retrospective **"John Szarkowski: Photographs."** Through May 15. ♦ **"Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul"** is the first American museum retrospective of the Norwegian artist (1863-1944) in thirty years. Through May 8. ♦ **"On-Site: New Architecture in Spain."** The designs here support an extraordinary range of functions, from hotels and museums to a flamenco center, a soccer stadium, a "Relaxation Park" in a resort town, and "Bioclimatic Towers" located in a wetland region. Likewise, the architects, both Spanish and foreign nationals (Eisenman, Nouvel, Gehry, Koolhaas, Hadid) working in Spain, emphasize a variety of elements, from materials to color, light, and sound. Highlighting Spain as a hotbed of innovative architecture is a well-founded notion, and, even if viewers are missing the full-blown experience of architecture, the models themselves are a sight to behold: beautifully crafted mini-sculptures made of rich woods and high-tech plastics, or, in the case of the "Hotel Habitat," a blinking multimedia creation of fluorescent lights, L.E.D.s, and a microcomputer. Through May 1. ♦ A survey of contemporary art from around the world, **"Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking"** cants toward work by artists from Islamic societies, though its aim is to demonstrate how assumptions based on geography can be misleading. Through May 22. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"David Smith: A Centennial."** Smith (1906-65) parlayed his experiences as a welder, an employee of the Studebaker company, a painter, and an acolyte of the Cubist movement into tremendous steel sculptures that were championed by Clement Greenberg and have become emblems of American modernism. Through May 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—For the first time in its history, the Whitney Biennial survey of contemporary art has a title: **"Day for Night,"** after the 1973 Truffaut film. There are more than a hundred artists represented in this year's show, among them Marilyn Minter, Peter Doig, Adam McEwan, Anne Collier, Kenneth Anger, and Robert Gober. Through May 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MAKING IT NEW

In the Roaring Twenties, Leopold Stokowski made the great Philadelphia Orchestra a quasi-avant-garde vehicle, confronting well-heeled audiences with the sculptured dissonances of Edgard Varèse. Under Christoph Eschenbach, the Philadelphia has resumed its commitment to the new, programming works by Magnus Lindberg, Christopher Rouse, and Esa-Pekka Salonen alongside the usual Beethoven. Recently, Simon Rattle came to town to lead the première of Sofia Gubaidulina's "Feast During a Plague," which had the power of a prophetic utterance. Gubaidulina intended her work as an eagle-eyed view of a riven world—abject misery on the one hand, empty-headed pleasure-seeking on the other—and she found a potent metaphor for her vision. A mammoth landscape of orchestral desolation, mixing craggy fanfares and insectoid movement up and down the chromatic scale, is periodically disrupted by blasts of prerecorded techno music. The piece builds to a numbing polyrhythmic climax, then shatters into silence. Fortunately, Gubaidulina does not specify what destiny she has foreseen.

—*Alex Ross*

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—**"Andrea Zittel: Small Liberties."** Concurrent with the New Museum's retrospective, the Whitney presents a selection of customized "Wagon Stations" made at Zittel's A-Z West project in the desert near Joshua Tree, California. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a re-creation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of the tortoises, frogs, and iguanas that he encountered in his travels to the Galápagos Islands. Through May 29. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is back for an eighth year. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Goya's Last Works."** Through May 14. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5. The galleries for the Goya exhibition will stay open until 8 on Friday evenings for the duration of the show.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
40 W. 53rd St. (212-956-3535)—A show about sustainability recycles selections from several recent exhibitions, including pieces by Andrea Zittel and Michael Rakowitz (whose work was recently on view in MOMA's "Safe: Design Takes on Risk"). **"Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art"** is a powerhouse nonetheless, filled with work, mostly utopian in nature, that blurs the categories of design and sculpture and delves into the politics of housing, land use, energy, and safety. The work that captures the most attention, possibly, is the least pragmatic—particularly shown alongside living pods and solar-powered communications. Allora & Calzadilla's video shows a man driving a conference table, overturned and outfitted with an outboard motor, around the island of Vieques, in Puerto Rico. Here, a gesture of protest becomes an unlikely, poetic source of beauty. Through May 7. (Open daily, 10 to 6; and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Treasures from Olana: Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church"** presents a selection of highly finished oil sketches. The Parthenon, the El Khasné temple at Petra, Mt. Chimborazo, in Ecuador, and Niagara's Horseshoe Falls glitter in miniature, less majestic than Church's monumental finished works, but still magical. Through April 30. ♦ **"For Spacious Skies: Hudson River School Paintings from the Henry and Sharon Martin Collection."** Through April 30. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Klee and America"** surveys the dialogue between the artist, whose work was influenced by Native American art, and the country, which embraced him in the thirties and forties, when he was being rejected as "degenerate" in Austria. Opens March 9. (Open Thursdays and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Temporarily located in the Chelsea Art Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—**"Andrea Zittel: Critical Space,"** a retrospective of the artist's highly specialized vehicles, living units, furnishings, textiles, and "uniforms," which she constructs and wears for six months at a stretch. Futuristic fantasies of streamlined practicality aside, no other artist so thoroughly addresses the intersection of consumerism and community. Through April 29. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Slavery in New York."** Through March 26. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Jessica Rankin: The Measure of Every Pause."** Rankin calls her embroidered panels "brainmaps," and they are indeed moodily cartographic. Like a nineteenth-century lady dreaming of heroic outdoor exploits, she stitches samplers that stretch to wall size, their translucent organdy threaded with meandering rivers, nubbly islands, and snatches of obscure text. This, her first solo museum show, adds to the painterly tapestries a pair of fragile, text-heavy wall drawings. It's beautiful work, and only slightly too dainty-poetical—when the reader/viewer discovers, in one of the wall drawings, a text reference to car stereos blasting hip-hop, it's a welcome shock. Through May 1. ♦ **"Ricky Swallow."** Through March 20. ♦ **"Wolfgang Tillmans: Freedom from the Known."** Through May 29. ♦ **"Jessica Stockholder: Of Standing Float Roots in Thin Air."** Through May 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Frequency,"** work by up-and-coming black artists active in the U.S. Through March 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ROY DECARAVA
DeCarava is a photographer who seems to see best in the dark. In night clubs, dance halls, tenements, and dimly lit subway platforms, he's the master of black-on-black subtlety, and his images draw us deep into spaces that he somehow manages to illuminate from within. This superb show of more than a hundred photos covers every aspect of DeCarava's wide-ranging career and includes some of his most famous images, of stoic black children, the streets of Harlem, Mississippi Freedom Marchers, and jazz musicians in performance. Among the latter is a showstopping series devoted to Billie Holiday, whose stormy radiance could cut through any gloom. Through March 11. (Jenkins Johnson, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-0707.)

LOUISE FISHMAN
All the elements of classic gestural Abstract Expressionism are here: the slashing, swiping brushwork, the drips and impasto, the sense of speedy execution. Fishman makes this familiar idiom her own, however, with a scored squeegee dragged across the surface and an innate sense of architecture that favors structural permanence over compositional spontaneity. A past series of paintings incorporated silt from the Pond of Ashes at Auschwitz into their pigmented surfaces. Her recent paintings are less consciously or gravely referential, although they conjure some kind of history, veering between the sombre blacks, blues, and grays of Motherwell and the more joyful pinks and greens of Joan Mitchell's Giverny-inspired paintings. Through March 25. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

SHIRAZEH HOUSHIARY
Obsessive repetition of gnomic marks—and the hint that paintings might really be drawings—suggest thoughts and impressions manifested as evanescent, breathlike clouds. Houshiary's palette is limited to black or ultramarine blue and white, and from across the room her nets of delicate hatches and circles blend as tonal washes. In a video in the back room, two seemingly settled canvases are animated into clouds of blowing chalk or fog. It's evocative, and pretty. One wishes, though, for something more: more depth to the illusion of coalescing and decomposing, or more at stake with the emotional and mental states evoked. Through March 25. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

ANTHONY LEPORE
Lepore, a photographer who got his M.F.A. from Yale last year, works in the popular quasi-documentary style that crops up in a lot of magazines. The big color pictures in his solid American début are of people and places that seesaw provocatively between the ordinary and the eccentric: A bearded man sits in the curve of a massive toy race-car track, absorbed and alone. A basement where fish trophies fill one wall also boasts a stuffed elephant lying on its side next to a deer and an elk. A couple making love on

KIM DEMARCO

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their couch are stalked by a cat, a dog, and a lace-covered doll. Through March 11. (Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363.)

MARVIN E. NEWMAN

The photographs in this smartly edited and installed exhibition were made early in Newman's career, between 1949 and 1958, and they reflect the influences of three formidable teachers, Walter Rosenblum, Harry Callahan, and Aaron Siskind, all of whom encouraged an innately restless intelligence. Much of Newman's work from this period is experimental, including snow scenes, beach scenes, and self-portraits made with a microfiche film that blocked out gray tones for a graphically arresting black-and-white effect. The range of approaches and subjects—from brick walls, strippers, and shadows on the sidewalk to Mickey Mantle at bat—is invigorating, and so is the pleasure of observing a style in formation. Through March 11. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

RACHEL WHITEREAD

Whiteread's new sculpture casts in plaster the interior voids of cardboard boxes. Here as elsewhere in her work, physicalized negative spaces read as metaphors for the human body, and the ghost boxes' surprisingly fine details—creases and tears, the stain of a rusty staple—express a poignant sense of struggle and perseverance. Whiteread's minimalist heritage and the seriality of mass-produced cartons require that there be a lot of them. Even so, the show feels overcrowded, and the pieces in which plaster objects are piled on real tables or chairs fall a bit flat. Better are Whiteread's simple but delicate collages, featuring what appear to be pictures cut from furniture and shipping-supply catalogues. Through April 1. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

Short List

ANGELO FILOMENO: Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889. Through March 11. **KAREN FINLEY:** Gray Kapernekas, 626 W. 26th St. 212-462-4150. Through March 18. **JULIE HEFFERNAN:** P.P.O.W., 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044. Through March 18. **ALFREDO JAAR:** Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470. Through March 18. **WILLIAM LAVEN:** Foley, 547 W. 27th St. 212-244-9081. Opens March 8. **MATT MULLICAN:** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 212-462-2668. Through March 11. **WILLIAM NICHOLSON:** Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave. 212-563-4474. Through March 18. **MICHAL ROVNER:** PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Through March 18. **NATASHA SWEETEN:** Thorp, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-691-6565. Through March 11.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

LEON GOLUB

The first posthumous exhibition of work by Golub—who died in 2004—retreats not one iota from his career-spanning engagement with, and rage against, political doublespeak and violence. The paintings on display, ranging in date from 1959 to 2003, are mostly monumental figure studies, brushily executed in acrylic on burlap-colored linen. Many of Golub's iconic characters appear, from bestially stupid soldiers to intelligently surly guard dogs and rifles propped upright as if animated by inner agency. Stencilled mottoes—"We can disappear you," "Bite your tongue," "We love our leader"—are not subtle, nor are they meant to be. Through March 18. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232.)

"LINE AND SURFACE"

Twenty-six artists contribute one drawing each, all investigating the basic properties of, well, line and/or surface texture. The works date from the fifties to the present, with an emphasis on the heroes of Ab Ex and minimalism, and are without exception of a modest, even sketch-like size. If you think this sounds monotonous, think again. The show hums with graphic energy, and no two works proceed from the same assumptions about how to make a mark. Louise Bourgeois, Lucio Fontana, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, and Jackson Pollock are among the masters included. Through March 25. (Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

DANCE

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Twenty-five years ago, Mark Morris knew he wanted to make dances but wasn't sure he wanted the hassle and burden of a company. A company was what he got, though—one that became an institution and is now being fêted by BAM with a monthlong series of films, concerts, photography exhibits, and talks. There's dancing, too: three ambitious programs. The first begins with "V" (2001), Morris's powerful visualization of Schumann's Quintet in E-Flat, continues with "Grand Duo" (1993), which does similar work with Lou Harrison's music, and finishes with "Gloria" (1981). That early dance, set to Vivaldi, announced Morris as both a great-theme humanist and the kind of choreographer who works score in hand—a trait now given a new twist as Morris makes his début as conductor. (Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. March 8-11 at 7:30 Through March 25.)

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY

A week of diverse revivals testifies to the range and depth of the seventy-five-year-old choreographer's canon. The disturbing mood of "Speaking in Tongues," whose chilling tale centers on a charismatic fundamentalist preacher, gives way to the headlong joy of "Esplanade"; the blind figures of "Dust" become the gloriously upright dancers of "Brandenburgs" and "Cascade." Among the seldom revived offerings are "Nightshade" (1979), a creepy, gothic mock romance, and the malevolent, grotesque "The Word" (1998), danced by a corps of religious followers in woollen knickers—and one glittering serpent. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. March 8-10 at 8, March 11 at 2 and 8, March 12 at 3, and March 14 at 7. Through March 19.)

SUSAN MARSHALL AND COMPANY

For her company's twentieth-anniversary performances, Marshall returns to the brevity that characterized her early career with "Cloudless," a series of terse solos and small group vignettes gathered together like a collection of short stories or poems. (Sections of the work premièred at Jacob's Pillow last summer.) Everyday gestures, set in formal patterns, are magnified—often, as in the minimalist music she prefers, through repetition. As a result, highly nuanced shifts of feeling turn dramatic while remaining ambiguous—recognizable but ineluctably strange. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 8-11 at 7:30. Through March 18.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA

Soledad Barrio, whose searing *siguiriya* was one of the high points of the recent Flamenco Festival, returns to Joe's Pub with her company, Noche Flamenca, which specializes in the visceral, unprocessed flamenco form known as *flamenco puro*. She and Antonio (El Chapote) Rodríguez will perform with two *cantaores* and a guitarist. (425 Lafayette St. 212-536-8778. March 8-12 at 7 and 9:30.)

THE FRANCESCA HARPER PROJECT

The 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Festival comes to a close with "Modo Fusion." Centered on an analogy between dance-theatre performers and beauty-pageant contestants, the multimedia event finds room for Harper's singing of her neo-soul songs, excerpts from "Apex," a thrashing, slashing dance she created for Alvin Ailey, and "Agon," by William Forsythe, in whose Frankfurt Ballet she displayed her striking physique for seven years. The production mines the easy satire in its concept but also reaches for wider resonances. (Ailey Theatre, 405 W. 55th St. 212-415-5500. March 8-9 and March 11 at 8 and March 12 at 2 and 7.)

DANCEBRAZIL

"Desafio," an unusually dark new work by the troupe's artistic director, Jelon Vieira, shares a program with last year's "Retratos da Bahia"

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at the Joyce. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. March 8-11 at 8 and March 12 at 2 and 7:30.)

"THOUSAND YEARS WAITING"
The choreographer-director Sonoko Kawahara and the playwright Chiori Miyagawa explore the nature of storytelling in a dance-theatre piece built around the near-extinct form of Otome Bunraku, which features a female puppeteer. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. March 8-10 at 8, March 11 at 4:30 and 8, and March 12 at 4:30.)

TCHAIKOVSKY BALLET AND ORCHESTRA
During the siege of Leningrad, the Kirov decamped to the provincial capital, Perm; its presence had a profound effect on the local company, the Tchaikovsky Ballet. This week, the company and its fifty-piece orchestra will perform their Soviet-era version of the Tchaikovsky/Petipa classic "Sleeping Beauty." We can expect great classical purity and technical strength from the ballerinas, especially Natalia Moiseeva in the role of Aurora. (Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, Lehman College, the Bronx. 718-960-8833. March 11 at 7.)

ATLANTA BALLET
One of the oldest regional companies in the country returns to Brooklyn College this week for the first time since 1987 to present two recent works and a world première, "Shoo Pah Minor," by Lauri Stallings, an ensemble work set to sections of four Vivaldi string concerti. "Shoo pah" is a term invented by the choreographer to describe the movements she created for the dancers, a floor-based fusion of ballet and contemporary that combines raw athleticism and gracefulness. The other works on the program are "Jupiter," by the company's director, John McFall, and a fast-moving ballet by the young British choreographer Christopher Hampson, "Sinfonietta Giocosa," set to Martinů's piece of the same name. (Walt Whitman Theatre at Brooklyn College. 718-951-4600. March 12 at 2.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
March 8 at 8: Plácido Domingo returns to lead the cast of **"Cyrano de Bergerac,"** a lovely but not very dramatic opera by Franco Alfano (the composer who completed Puccini's "Turandot"). Also with Cynthia Lawrence, Fernando de la Mora, and Kim Josephson; Marco Armiliato conducts. ♦ March 11 at 8:30: With Sondra Radvanovsky, Raymond Very, and Anthony Michaels-Moore replacing Lawrence, de la Mora, and Josephson. ♦ March 9 at 8: The final performance of **"Roméo et Juliette,"** with Maureen O'Flynn and Ramón Vargas in the leading roles; Bertrand de Billy. ♦ March 10 at 8 and March 14 at 7:30: The Met's long association with the conductor Valery Gergiev has brought forth a number of exciting Russian novelties. The latest is Tchaikovsky's **"Mazeppa,"** a surprisingly intimate opera (based on a Pushkin poem) about a treacherous Cossack chieftain. Rarely performed outside Russia, it features a cast headed by Olga Guryakova, Larissa Diadkova, Nikolai Putilin, and Paata Burchuladze. ♦ March 11 at 1:30: Giancarlo del Monaco's production of **"La Forza del Destino,"** with Deborah Voigt and Salvatore Licitra, who head a cast that also includes Ildikó Komlósi, Mark Delavan, Juan Pons, and Samuel Ramey; Gianandrea Noseda conducts. ♦ March 13 at 8: Verdi's **"Luisa Miller,"** in the Elijah Moshinsky production (with sets by Santo Loquasto), returns to the repertory, with a cast that includes Barbara Frittoli, Irina Mishura, Neil Shicoff, Carlos Alvarez, James Morris, and Philip Ens; Maurizio Benini. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
March 9 at 7:30, March 10 at 8, and March 11 at 1:30 and 8: Paul Sorvino and Lisa Vroman star in a revival of Frank Loesser's **"The Most Happy Fella"**; George Manahan conducts. ♦ March 12 at 1:30: **"La Bohème"** returns in James Robinson's production, set in Paris during the First World War. With Kelly Kaduce, Shannah Timms, Gerard Powers, and Grant Youngblood; Steven White. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE: "TREEMONISHA"
Scott Joplin's only surviving large-scale work—the Holy Grail of African-American musical theatre and the apotheosis of the ragtime style—is a mythical tale about the struggles of a community of former slaves, set on an abandoned plantation during the Reconstruction era; it won him a posthumous Pulitzer Prize in 1976. Roger Rees directs a semi-staged performance featuring Anita Johnson, Marietta Simpson, and Arthur Woodley; Robert Bass conducts the T. J. Anderson orchestration. (Alice Tully Hall. 917-321-2140. March 9 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Christoph von Dohnányi, a sober conductor in the German intellectual tradition, conducts a program of rare magnitude—Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony and a concert version of Bartók's one-act opera, "Bluebeard's Castle." Anne Sofie von Otter is the hapless Judith; Matthias Goerne is her menacing new husband. (March 9 at 7:30 and March 10-11 at 8.) ♦ For something completely different, there's Garrison Keillor's "Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra," a one-night affair in which the Minnesota humorist will describe the workings of a modern symphony orchestra, using more than a dash of the Upper Midwest sandpaper wit for which he is renowned. Philip Brunelle, another Twin Cities phenom and Keillor's musical enabler of several decades, conducts a selection of illustrative works. (March 14 at 7:30.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Robert Spano conducts Verdi's Requiem, with the renowned Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus and an impressive slate of soloists: Andrea Gruber, Stephanie Blythe, Frank Lopardo, and Greer Grimsley. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 11 at 8.)

KIROV ORCHESTRA
Lincoln Center, recently on a Tchaikovsky tear, turns to the music of Shostakovich, inviting in one of the composer's master interpreters, Valery Gergiev, to lead a cycle of the complete symphonies over the next several months. It all begins with two concerts by the magnificent orchestra of the Marinsky Theatre. March 12 at 3: The popular and powerful First and Tenth Symphonies bookend a concert that also includes the Symphony No. 2, "To October" (with the Riverside Choral Society and the Rutgers University Kirkpatrick Choir), a Communist broadside and one of the composer's strangest works. ♦ March 13 at 8: The terse and witty Symphony No. 9 is a prelude for the massive, grandiloquent Symphony No. 7, "Leningrad." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The conductorless ensemble, long admired for its technical virtuosity, is opening up a new chapter in its history by collaborating with members of the Bach Choir of New York in a cycle of Bach Cantatas; the latest concert features the Cantatas Nos. 18, 157, and 193 ("Ihr Tore zu Zion"). (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. March 13 at 8.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "THE BANQUET YEARS"
Steven Blier and Michael Barrett's outfit samples the enticing soufflé that was French avant-garde culture in the years before the First World War, with Marie Lenormand and Hugh Russell singing songs by Poulenc, Hahn, Chabrier, Falla, and Stravinsky. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 8 at 8.)

"PERSPECTIVES: IAN BOSTRIDGE"
March 8 at 7:30: The scholarly British tenor, who has proved his worth as a Britten interpreter

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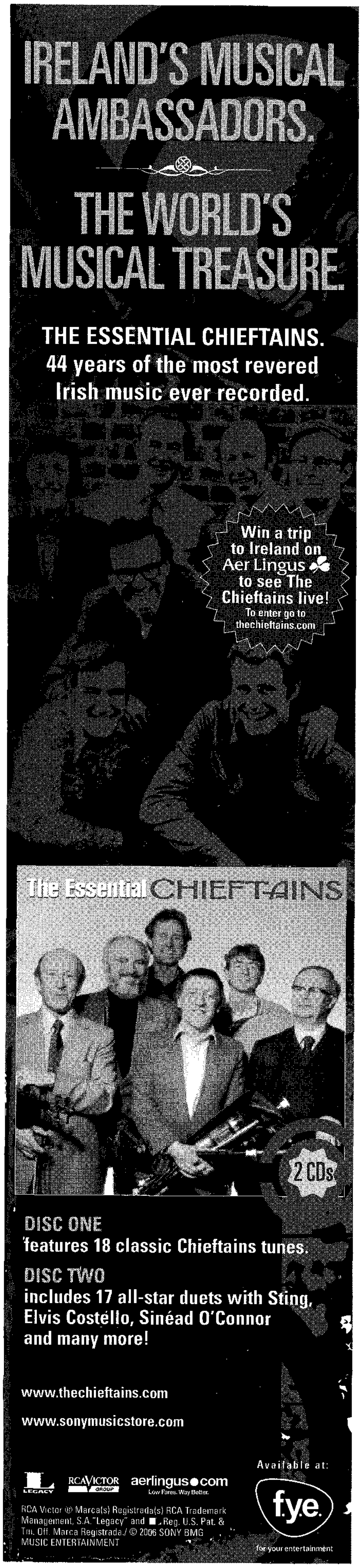
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on a new EMI disk, joins two other exceptional singers (Nathan Gunn and Bejun Mehta) for a Britten program that includes the cycle "Winter Words" and all five of the Canticles. ♦ March 13 at 7:30: Bostridge teams up with the pianist Julius Drake and the young Belcea Quartet for a varied program of works by Fauré ("La Bonne Chanson"), Vaughan Williams ("On Wenlock Edge"), and Shostakovich. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800.)

MAYA BEISER: "ALMOST HUMAN"
The powerhouse cellist, a consistent advocate for genre-bending works, offers music by Tan Dun and Chinary Ung, along with world premières of pieces by such composers as Brett Dean, Michael Gordon, and Eve Beglarian ("From a Far-Off Country," with video by Shirin Neshat and text by Henri Michaux). The mezzo-soprano Alexandra Montano and the male vocal group Lionheart are her guests. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. March 9 at 7:30.)

MENDELSSOHN QUARTET
The longtime New York foursome joins the young pianist Jonathan Biss for performances of music by Mendelssohn, Beethoven (the "Harp" Quartet), and Dvořák (the Piano Quintet). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. March 10 at 8.)

MERIDIAN ARTS ENSEMBLE
The brass quintet, as uninhibited as they are expert, offers newly commissioned works by the Latin-American composers Dafnis Prieto and Hermeto Pascoal along with works by Piazzolla, Xenakis, and Don Van Vliet (a.k.a. Captain Beefheart). (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 10 at 8:30.)

AN DIE MUSIK
Works with text are a perennial favorite of this convivial (and virtuosic) ensemble, which will feature Jerzy Sapieyevski's "Aesop Suite" (narrated by Jenny Hayden) along with music by Beethoven and Schubert (the magisterial String Quintet). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 12 at 4.)

SPECULUM MUSICAE
In a ninetieth-birthday tribute, several members of the renowned group team up with younger artists to celebrate the works of Milton Babbitt (including "Around the Horn") as well as music by his predecessor Schoenberg (the String Trio, Op. 45) and his student Paul Lansky. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 13 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

ASK THE DUST
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening March 10. (In wide release.)

DUCK SEASON
Fernando Eimbcke directed this comedy, from Mexico, about two fourteen-year-old boys alone in an apartment on a Sunday. In Spanish. Opening March 10. (Angelika Film Center.)

EVIL
Mikael Håfström ("Derailed") directed this thriller about a boarding-school student who is tormented by bullies. In Swedish. Opening March 10. (Cinema Village.)

FAILURE TO LAUNCH
A comedy about a man (Matthew McConaughey) whose parents find him a girlfriend (Sarah Jessica Parker) in order to get him out of their house. Directed by Tom Dey. Opening March 10. (In wide release.)

GAME 6
Don DeLillo wrote this drama, set in 1986, about a playwright who hopes that his luck will change if the Red Sox win the World Series. Directed by Michael Hoffman. Opening March 10. (Union Square.)

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 10. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE HILLS HAVE EYES
Alexandre Aja directed this remake of Wes Craven's 1977 horror film, about a family being terrorized on a deserted road. Opening March 10. (In wide release.)

THE SHAGGY DOG
A remake of the 1959 family comedy, starring Tim Allen as a man who turns into a dog. Directed by Brian Robbins. Opening March 10. (In wide release.)

SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS
A documentary, directed by Hank Rogerson, about a production of "The Tempest" by convicts at a Kentucky prison. Opening March 10. (Quad Cinema.)

TABLES FOR TWO
HONG KONG STATION

(128 Hester St. 212-966-9382)—Hong Kong Station is an apt name for this popular Chinese noodle joint: regulars behave with the proprietary ease—and interlopers with the gawky wonderment—that one might expect to find in Grand Central. Navigating the menu, for the uninitiated, can be tough. Since the dishes are mix-and-match, like a liquid salad bar, there are many choices to be made, and, since the ordering is done cafeteria-style, they have to be made quickly so as not to antagonize those waiting in the (often long) line.

Hong Kong Station's motto is "The Taste of Hong Kong Here at Home." The look is a neat amalgam of fast-food familiar (sleek logo, employees in matching polo shirts and bright-orange visors) and Chinatown exotic (cat statues, a pair of large, mysterious tongs hanging next to the toilet). The staff's English is probably better than your Cantonese, but the result is not always total comprehension. The first step is to choose your noodles. There are nine kinds, seasoned according to preference, and ranging from the "thick noodle" to *lai fun*, a tightly coiled vermicelli that resembles Spanish moss. Toppings, a dollar apiece, include beef shin, chicken wings, fish patties, and an array of luncheon meats including Spam and hot dogs. It's fun to submit to suggestions from the crowd, even if you end up with a six-buck bowl, fully loaded with extras you're not sure you wanted. Curried fish balls, enthusiastically vouched for, lack heat and have the suspiciously dense texture of Chicken McNuggets. But pig's feet, served on the bone, are a spicy treat, although they might be even better if you could eat them blindfolded.

Most beloved is the "faux fin soup," made with filaments of pork and mushroom instead of shark fin. "When I was little," a young woman sitting near the counter, who explained that she was from Hong Kong, said, "I'd save my spare change to get a bowl off the street." She poured a bit of her drink, made with black-currant juice and lemon, into a plastic ramekin. "Try this." Like her inclination to share, it was very sweet. (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées start at $1.)

—*Lauren Collins*

NOW PLAYING

ASK THE DUST
Robert Towne spent thirty years chasing the chance to film John Fante's cult-classic quasi-autobiographical 1939 novel about Arturo Bandini, a hardscrabble young writer in a seedy Los Angeles hotel, and Camilla Lopez, the fierce Mexican waitress with whom he shares lust and rage. It wasn't worth the wait. He got Colin Farrell to pretend to be a writer, reconstructed nineteen-thirties L.A. on a back lot in South Africa, and patched the soundtrack with freeze-dried snippets of Fante's book. Farrell does not burn with Bandini's tormented conflict between virtue and desire (or with anything at all), Towne dilutes beyond recognition the self-righteous nastiness that is Fante's true charm, and Salma Hayek, undirected as Camilla, is merely the object of the director's late-autumn fantasies. The first shot of her is a side view from shoulder to waist, and things go downhill from there.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
In the summer of 1963, Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) herd the sheep on Brokeback Mountain, in Wyoming, and fall in love. Ang Lee's movie traces the ups and downs of that love over many years, making it clear that the downs are fated to outnumber the ups. The film has a curious motion to begin with, managing to seem at once hectic and sluggish; once the heroes start to grow up, however, and thus to struggle against their feelings, the story comes painfully alive, and the performances stretch toward the tragic. The picture belongs to Ledger, whose downcast gaze and chewed-up words bear almost unbearable testimony to a heart under siege. The only issue here is the oldest and most sorrowful one of all.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/12/05.) (In wide release.)

CAPOTE
How could Truman Capote, with his high, thin, goose-quill voice and his floating palms, possibly have gained the trust of the straightforward men and women of Holcomb, Kansas, when he went there for this magazine in 1959 to investigate the pointless slaughter of four members of the Clutter family—the murders that became the subject of Capote's masterpiece, "In Cold Blood"? The writer Dan Futterman and the director Bennett Miller tell us how, and the wonderful Philip Seymour Hoffman first captures Capote physically and then works inward to the vulnerable yet rotting soul. This is easily the most intelligent and detailed film ever made about a writer's working method and character.—*David Denby* (10/10/05) (In wide release.)

A DOLL'S HOUSE
The casting of Jane Fonda in her actress-activist prime as Ibsen's existentially roused housewife Nora led moviegoers to assume that this 1973 production would be a feminist tract. But the unmistakably American and contemporary Fonda is exciting and unpredictable in the role—that of a woman who has never fully confronted or expressed the independent streak that is hardwired into her system. When she and the calm, poetic Delphine Seyrig have their heart-to-hearts, the two very different actresses pull off melancholy duets, touching on themes of naïveté and experience. Unfortunately, the director, Joseph Losey, and the screenwriter, David Mercer, vary the settings too often; they open up the action and let the intensity evaporate. There's no magnetism, positive or negative, between Fonda and David Warner as Nora's husband, and Trevor Howard delivers one of his sloppiest aging-sensualist routines as Dr. Rank.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; March 11.)

GOOD GIRL
In this intellectual comedy, written and directed by Sophie Fillières, Emmanuelle Devos plays Fontaine Leglou (the name sounds as funny in French), an anesthesiologist at a mental hospital. Fontaine lives with a professorial boyfriend whose name, Michel Strogoff, happens to be that of a Jules Verne novel (her colleague tells him, "I've heard of you"), but she falls in love with one of her patients, Philippe. The twisting plot is built on ingeniously programmed coincidences, embarrassing accidents, weird slips of the tongue, and surprising confessions. The writing is skewed and brilliant (scientific expositions and shopping sprees stand in for declarations of love). And the images are as restrained and as precise as the highly ordered behavior of the characters, who wear their mask of dignity tightly bound in order not to burst out laughing or screaming. Fillières's hysterically repressed world is a Jacques Tati landscape in which the technological obstacles have been reduced to verbal tics by too many years of psychoanalysis and a feminine sensibility that Fillières avows with an unabashed romantic sincerity.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; March 10-11. Walter Reade Theatre; March 12-13.)

MADEA'S FAMILY REUNION
Big mama Madea returns in the playwright Tyler Perry's scattershot cultural happening. Perry, in drag, plays the sassy Southern matriarch with broad comedic strokes, and, although the result is sometimes like watching Oprah Winfrey in a Three Stooges routine, his character taps into a maternal wisdom that is both familiar and comforting. But the film's sloppy mix of melodrama and ribald humor borders on the incoherent, and the well-intentioned sermonizing (Maya Angelou and Cicely Tyson dispense bromides) is so willfully earnest that the film teeters into a polemic on responsibility rather than extolling the good-natured love of family that Perry clearly sees as true salvation.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

NIGHT WATCH
The first part of a trilogy by the Russian director Timur Bekmambetov. Any attempt to summarize the plot is liable to result in complete mental collapse; suffice it to say that it is set largely in modern-day Moscow, that it revolves around the small matter of a global feud between darkness and light, and that the list of characters includes blood drinkers and clairvoyants, plus a well-behaved owl that, much to its own surprise, turns into a naked woman. Some viewers have chided Bekmambetov for trying too hard to emulate the pacing and blowsy special effects of the American blockbuster, but there is a grimy fascination in seeing those methods applied (at a fraction of the cost) to an unfamiliar setting, rife with desperation and decay. In Russian, with artfully worked subtitles.—*A.L.* (2/27/06) (Sunshine Cinema.)

OUR BRAND IS CRISIS
A tragicomedy of good intentions gone awry. In 2002, a group of Bill Clinton's political consultants (including James Carville) attempted to get Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada—or Goni, as everyone calls him—back into office in Bolivia. Goni, a successful businessman raised in America, had been President of Bolivia from 1993 to 1997 and had instituted a center-left program of privatization combined with social security and national health care. When he ran again, in 2002, his American advisers drew on the advanced technology of campaigning—polls, focus groups, advertising, branding—in a poor country that was sliding into a populist and nationalist revolt. As throngs of campesinos gathered in the streets, the Clintonites got their man elected (by a tiny plurality), but he quickly lost power. The young documentary filmmaker Rachel Boynton follows the campaign from beginning to end, but she also cuts in rueful interviews with the principals that were filmed afterward, so we get reflections on the disaster as we watch it unfold. The results are a painful but instructive lesson in the dangers of American arrogance.—*D.D.* (3/6/06) (Film Forum.)

SOPHIE SCHOLL: THE FINAL DAYS
A careful rendering of a monstrous case. As the title suggests, we follow the last act in the life of

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Sophie Scholl (Julia Jentsch), who, with her brother Hans (Fabian Hinrichs) and a friend, Christoph Probst (Florian Stetter), was arrested in 1943 on a charge of treason. Their crime was distributing leaflets at Munich University that protested against Nazi rule and an unwinnable war; the punishment was death. Marc Rothemund's film is unadorned and verges on the dull, but behind the plodding procedures of the law you sense the beat of terror, and the effect is to quicken even the most fleeting actions with an emotional charge. The heart of the film is Sophie's three-day interrogation at the hands of Robert Mohr (Alexander Held); although no violence is done, you become gripped by the sight of a dead soul hounding a living one and being outsmarted by her unbreakable goodness. The subsequent trial is a travesty, worsened by one's knowledge that the judge (André Hennicke) really was as maddened and ranting as depicted here. The finale is as quick as it is awful, and not for the faint of heart. In German.—*A.L.* (2/27/06) (Film Forum.)

THE SQUID AND THE WHALE
The time is 1986, in Brooklyn's idyllic Park Slope, and a family is breaking up. The dad, Bernard (Jeff Daniels), a college literature teacher and an increasingly unsuccessful novelist, has become a sour and selfish liar; the mom, Joan (Laura Linney), can't stop leaving evidence of her love affairs around the house. Walt (Jesse Eisenberg), sixteen, parrots every one of his dad's huffy opinions; Frank (Owen Kline), is a twelve-year-old in a sexual uproar. The movie is a satirical comedy—ruthless and heartbreaking—but a comedy nonetheless; the writer-director Noah Baumbach has captured the way educated parents project their self-love and their career anxieties onto bright children, and the way kids respond to the currents of parental misconduct like pilot fish shimmying around a wayward shark. Baumbach's touch is light, sure, devastating.—*D.D.* (10/24/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TENTH DISTRICT COURT
Granted permission to film trials in a courtroom in the tenth arrondissement in Paris in 2003, the documentary director Raymond Depardon offers American viewers a fascinating view of the French judicial system—in other words, of life without the Fifth Amendment. The twelve defendants who appear before Judge Michèle Bernard-Requin and her colleagues for such offenses as drunk driving, marijuana peddling, petty larceny, and arms possession must stand at a podium in the center of court and answer her direct questions. Without a jury to seduce, the defendants wear their usual clothes and speak their mind with a refreshingly contentious frankness, and defense attorneys are reduced to a supporting role. Yet those defendants who are not penalized for lying are done in by their confessions, and the effect, unlike the ritualized theatre of American proceedings, is of a blood sport like bullfighting that only a connoisseur with a strong stomach can enjoy. In French.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade Theatre; March 8-9.)

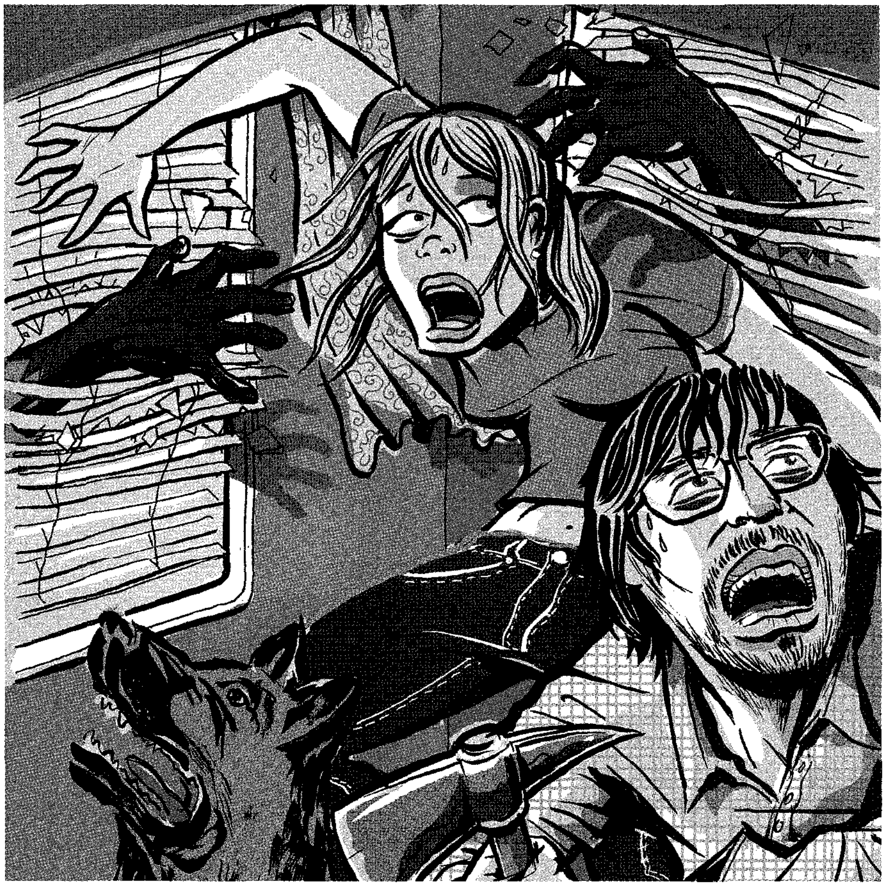
TSOTSI
In Gavin Hood's South African drama (an Oscar nominee for best foreign film), the nonactor Presley Chweneyagae plays Tsotsi, a hooded, toughened gang leader in a Johannesburg shantytown who kills for money and beats his friend for challenging his dignity. When Tsotsi shoots a woman for her car and finds that he has unwittingly absconded with her baby, he is struck with a dilemma: what to do with the baby? This would be interesting if Tsotsi's choice were not immediately clear. In a film depicting a seemingly lawless society, where women are decent and men are helpless or derelict without them, Tsotsi's painful attempts to care for an infant seem not revelatory but calculated. Curiously styled, with rap-video camera moves giving way to sensitive closeups, this reductive story of redemption milks the sentimentality, rather than the profundity, born of an extreme change of heart. In Zulu, Xhosa, and Afrikaans.—*Shauna Lyon* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNKNOWN WHITE MALE
Rupert Murray's modest documentary explores a fascinating subject: his friend Doug Bruce, a former highly successful Wall Street broker, who woke up one day on the subway to Coney Island with no knowledge of who he was. Doctors surmise that Doug lost his episodic (autobiographical) memory but retained his semantic (ideas and concepts) and procedural (skills and know-how) memory; the cause remains elusive. Home-video footage shows an acerbic, emotionally limited young rogue; the new Doug is a docile naïf blown away by his "first" glimpse of the ocean and visit to the Met. Speculation that he is faking it is abated with one look at his post-amnesiac face: when Doug meets his family and old friends for the first time, he stares at them like a stunned dog and lets himself be hugged and cajoled as he learns what it's like to be Doug.—*S.L.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

WOMAN IS THE FUTURE OF MAN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Cinema Village.)

Also Playing

CRASH: Quad Cinema (5/2/05). **MATCH POINT:** In wide release (1/9/06). **RUNNING SCARED:** In wide release. **TRANSAMERICA:** In wide release.



Alexandre Aja's remake of Wes Craven's "The Hills Have Eyes" opens March 10.

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Thirteenth Annual New York Underground Film Festival. For listings, visit www.nyuff.com.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Some Kind of Horror Show." March 8 at 7: "Eye of the Cat" (1969, David Lowell Rich) and "Reflection of Fear" (1973, William A. Fraker). ♦ March 9 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Dunwich Horror" (1970, Daniel Haller). ♦ March 13-14 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Kuroneko" (1968, Kaneto Shindo; in Japanese). ♦ The films of Hiroshi Teshigahara. March 10 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Summer Soldiers" (1972; in Japanese). ♦ March 11-12 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Face of Another" (1966; in Japanese).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. March 8-14 at 1:30, 4, 7, and 9:30: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"CinémaTuesdays." March 14 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Les Soeurs Fâchées (Me and My Sister)" (2004, Alexandra Leclère; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Through March 19: "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." All films are in French. Most screenings are introduced by the director. For further information, visit www.filmlinc.com. March 10 at noon and 5: "Not Here to Be Loved" (2005, Stéphane Brizé). ♦ March 10 at 2:30 and March 11 at noon: "Good Girl" (†). ♦ March 11 at 2:30 and March 12 at 7: "La Moustache" (2005, Emmanuel Carrère). ♦ March 11 at 5 and 10: "Russian Dolls" (2005, Cédric Klapisch). ♦ March 11 at 8: "Hell" (2005, Danis Tanovic). ♦ March 12 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Orchestra Seats" (2006, Danièle Thompson). ♦ March 13 at 7: "Le Petit Lieutenant" (2005, Xavier Beauvois). ♦ March 14 at 7 and 9:30: "Grey Souls" (2005, Yves Angelo). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." March 10-11 at midnight: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese). ♦ "Weekend Classics." March 10-12 at noon: "Rashomon" (1950, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Sneak preview. "Highway Courtesans" (2005, Mystelle Brabee), followed by a Q. & A. with the director.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Documentary Fortnight." March 8 at 8:30: "The Other Side" (2005, Natalia Almada;

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- ✓ pack for vacation
- ✓ get tires checked
- ask doctor about arthritis

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Medication Guide for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

(See the end of this Medication Guide for a list of prescription NSAID medicines.)

What is the most important information I should know about medicines called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death.

This chance increases:

- with longer use of NSAID medicines
- in people who have heart disease

NSAID medicines should never be used right before or after a heart surgery called a "coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)."

NSAID medicines can cause ulcers and bleeding in the stomach and intestines at any time during treatment. Ulcers and bleeding:

- can happen without warning symptoms
- may cause death

The chance of a person getting an ulcer or bleeding increases with:

- taking medicines called "corticosteroids" and "anticoagulants"
- longer use
- smoking
- drinking alcohol
- older age
- having poor health

NSAID medicines should only be used:

- exactly as prescribed
- at the lowest dose possible for your treatment
- for the shortest time needed

What are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines are used to treat pain and redness, swelling, and heat (inflammation) from medical conditions such as:

- different types of arthritis
- menstrual cramps and other types of short-term pain

Who should not take a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?

Do not take an NSAID medicine:

- if you had an asthma attack, hives, or other allergic reaction with aspirin or any other NSAID medicine
- for pain right before or after heart bypass surgery

Tell your healthcare provider:

- about all of your medical conditions.
- about all of the medicines you take. NSAIDs and some other medicines can interact with each other and cause serious side effects. **Keep a list of your medicines to show to your health care provider and pharmacist.**
- if you are pregnant. **NSAID medicines should not be used by pregnant women late in their pregnancy.**
- if you are breastfeeding. **Talk to your doctor.**

What are the possible side effects of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

Serious side effects include:

- heart attack
- stroke
- high blood pressure
- heart failure from body swelling (fluid retention)
- kidney problems including kidney failure
- bleeding and ulcers in the stomach and intestine
- low red blood cells (anemia)
- life-threatening skin reactions
- life-threatening allergic reactions
- liver problems including liver failure
- asthma attacks in people who have asthma

Other side effects include:

- stomach pain
- constipation
- diarrhea
- gas
- heartburn
- nausea
- vomiting
- dizziness

Get emergency help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- chest pain
- weakness in one part or side of your body
- slurred speech
- swelling of the face or throat

Stop your NSAID medicine and call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- nausea
- more tired or weaker than usual
- itching
- your skin or eyes look yellow
- stomach pain
- flu-like symptoms
- vomit blood
- there is blood in your bowel movement or it is black and sticky like tar
- skin rash or blisters with fever
- unusual weight gain
- swelling of the arms and legs, hands and feet

These are not all the side effects with NSAID medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information about NSAID medicines.

Other information about Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

- Aspirin is an NSAID medicine but it does not increase the chance of a heart attack. Aspirin can cause bleeding in the brain, stomach, and intestines. Aspirin can also cause ulcers in the stomach and intestines.
- Some of these NSAID medicines are sold in lower doses without a prescription (over-the-counter). Talk to your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter NSAIDs for more than 10 days.

NSAID medicines that need a prescription

Generic Name	Tradename
Celecoxib	Celebrex
Diclofenac	Cataflam, Voltaren, Arthrotec (combined with misoprostol)
Diflunisal	Dolobid
Etodolac	Lodine, Lodine XL
Fenoprofen	Nalfon, Nalfon 200
Flurbiprofen	Ansaid
Ibuprofen	Motrin, Tab-Profen, Vicoprofen (combined with hydrocodone), Combunox (combined with oxycodone)
Indomethacin	Indocin, Indocin SR, Indo-Lemmon, Indomethagan
Ketoprofen	Oruvail
Ketorolac	Toradol
Mefenamic Acid	Ponstel
Meloxicam	Mobic
Nabumetone	Relafen
Naproxen	Naprosyn, Anaprox, Anaprox DS, EC-Naproxyn, Naprelan, Naprapac (copackaged with lansoprazole)
Oxaprozin	Daypro
Piroxicam	Feldene
Sulindac	Clinoril
Tolmetin	Tolectin, Tolectin DS, Tolectin 600

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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in Spanish). ♦ March 9 at 6 and March 12 at 4: "Original Child Bomb" (2004, Carey McKenzie). The March 9 screening will be introduced by the director. ♦ March 9-10 at 8: "Land Mines: A Love Story" (2005, Dennis O'Rourke). ♦ March 10 at 6: "God Sleeps in Rwanda" (2005, Kimberlee Acquaro and Stacy Sherman) and "The Little Soldiers" (2004, François Margolin; in English and French), introduced by Acquaro. ♦ March 11 at 4: "The Tenth Planet, a Single Life in Baghdad" (2004, Melis Birder; in English and Arabic) and "Terror" (2005, Termite TV Collective), introduced by Termite TV Collective. ♦ March 11 at 6: "Bachelor Farmer" (2005, Michael Culpepper and Nikki Draper) and "What Is Gay?" (2005, Jacqui Frost). ♦ March 11 at 8: "The Texture of Life" (2003, Ray and Judy Schmidt) and "Poumy" (2005, Sam Ball; in French). ♦ March 12 at 2: "The Tailenders" (2005, Adele Horne). ♦ March 13 at 8:30: "A Model for Matisse: The Story of the Vence Chapel" (2005, Barbara Freed; in French), introduced by the director. ♦ "Prix Jean Vigo." March 9 at 6:30 and March 11 at 2: "Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?" (1965, William Klein; in French) and "Girls and Dogs" (1991, Sophie Fillières; in French). ♦ "Edvard Munch and His Time." March 10 at 6 and March 12 at 2: "Edvard Munch" (1976, Peter Watkins; in Norwegian). ♦ March 11 at 4:30: "A Doll's House" (†). ♦ March 11 at 7: "Hunger" (1966, Henning Carlsen; in Norwegian and Swedish) and documentary footage shot by Munch. ♦ March 13 at 6: "Miss Julie" (1951, Alf Sjöberg; in Swedish). ♦ March 13 at 8: "An Enemy of the People" (2005, Erik Skjoldbjærg; in Norwegian). ♦ Special screening. March 12 at 5:15: "Eugene O'Neill: A Documentary Film" (2006, Ric Burns).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—*Repertory nights.* March 10 at 7:30 and March 11-12 at 6:30: "Saraband" (2005, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Films featuring Anna May Wong. March 11-12 at 2: "Song" (1928, Richard Eichberg; silent). ♦ March 11-12 at 4:30: "The Pavement Butterfly" (1929, Eichberg; silent).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Premières. March 8 at 9: "Home" (2005, Matt Zoller Seitz), introduced by the director. ♦ March 9 at 6:30: "Goodnite Charlie" (2005, Kenya Cagle). ♦ March 9-10 at 9, March 11-12 at 4:30 and 9, March 13-14 at 9: "The Fallen" (2005, Ari Taub; in German, English, and Italian). ♦ March 10 at 7: "Welcome to New York" (2005, Bettina Perut and Ivan Osnovikoff). ♦ March 11 at 7: "24 Hours on Craigslist" (2005, Michael Ferris Gibson). ♦ March 11 at 11:20: "Neighbor No. 13" (2005, Yasuo Inoue; in Japanese). ♦ March 12 at 7: "Side Effects" (2005, Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau). ♦ March 14 at 7: "75 Degrees in July" (2000, Hyatt Bass). ♦ "Bizarro Mondays." March 13 at 7: Videos by Clayton Patterson.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." March 10-11: "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" (1985, Tim Burton).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Special screenings. March 12 at 2 and March 14 at 6: "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1951, Elia Kazan). ♦ March 12 at 4:45: "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). ♦ March 14 at 8:45: "Triple Agent" (2004, Eric Rohmer; in French, Russian, and German).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Classic and recent French documentaries. All films are in French. March 8 at 1:30 and March 9 at 8:30: "Tenth District Court" (†). ♦ March 8 at 3:40: "Le Joli Mai" (1962, Chris Marker). ♦ March 8 at 6 and March 9 at 4:45: "A Visitor from the Living" (1997, Claude Lanzmann) and "Saia, the Shadows" (2000, Florent Marcie). ♦ March 9 at 1: "Reprise" (1997, Hervé Le Roux). ♦ March 9 at 6:40: "Starting Place" (1993, Robert Kramer). ♦ Through March 19: "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." All films are in French. Most screenings

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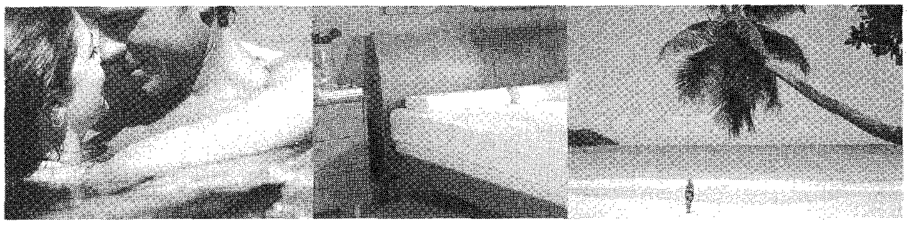

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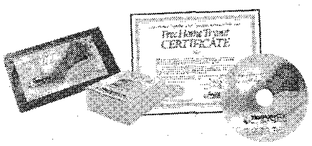

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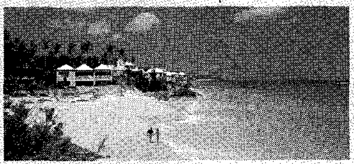

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are introduced by the director. For further information, visit www.filmlinc.com. March 10 at 7: "Palais Royal!" (2005, Valérie Lemercier); screening at Alice Tully Hall, followed by opening-night reception. ♦ March 10 at 1, March 11 at 6:15, and March 12 at 3:45: "La Moustache" (2005, Emmanuel Carrère). ♦ March 10 at 3:30 and March 11 at 1:15 and 9: "Orchestra Seats" (2006, Danièle Thompson). ♦ March 11 at 3:45 and March 13 at 8:45: "Not Here to Be Loved" (2005, Stéphane Brizé). ♦ March 12 at 1:15 and 6:15 and March 13 at 3:30: "Good Girl" (†). ♦ March 12 at 8:45 and March 14 at 1:15 and 8:45: "Russian Dolls" (2005, Cédric Klapisch). ♦ March 13 at 1 and 6:15 and March 14 at 4: "You Are So Handsome" (2006, Isabelle Mergault). ♦ March 14 at 6:15: "Cold Showers" (2005, Antony Cordier).

READINGS AND TALKS

"SELECTED SHORTS"

The long-running series pairing actors with short stories continues on March 8 at 6:30, with B. D. Wong and Stephen Lang reading stories by Roald Dahl and J. Robert Lennon. The Ying Quartet will also perform. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)

DAHESH MUSEUM

In conjunction with "Stories to Tell," the current show about the golden age of illustration (c. 1880-1930, according to the museum), nine living illustrators are presenting lectures about their own work and conducting gallery tours in which they discuss their favorites on display. The series starts on March 11 at 1 with Stephen Savage and continues on Saturdays through May 6. (580 Madison Ave., between 56th and 57th Sts. 212-759-0606.)

GARRY KASPAROV

The master chess player talks about his new book, "Garry Kasparov on My Great Predecessors." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary. March 12 at 1.)

"DUBLIN NOIR"

Jason Starr, Reed Farrell Coleman, Peter Spiegelman, and Jim Fusilli read from their contributions to this new anthology of dark Irish tales. (Coliseum Books, 11 W. 42nd St. No tickets necessary. March 13 at 6:30.)

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE

There's a Munch retrospective currently on display at the Museum of Modern Art, and this center of Nordic culture, which has a companion show, is presenting three lectures on the Norwegian painter. They start on March 14 at 6:30 with Joan Templeton, the president of the Ibsen Society of America, who will discuss the relationship between the artist and the playwright. (58 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-847-9717. The lectures run through April 20.)

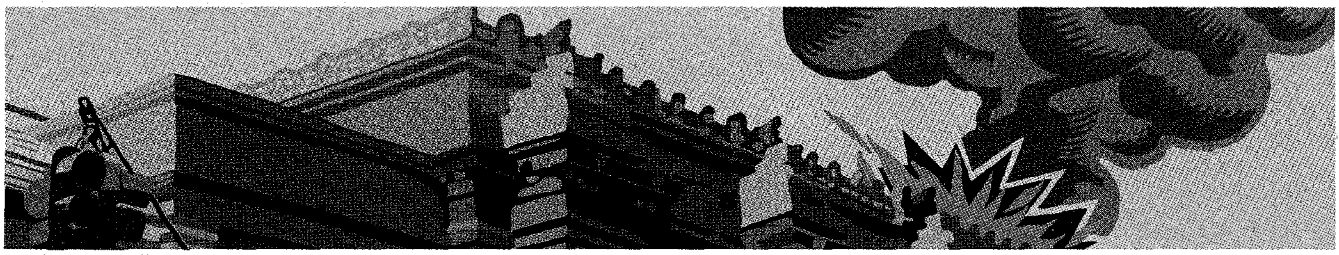
ABOVE AND BEYOND

USA MEMORY CHAMPIONSHIP

Competitors in this annual test of memorization are given faces and names, sequences of playing cards, random words, strings of numbers, and poetry to study, then scored on how well they can recall the information. And while there are strategies for preparing, don't think that well-read English majors have any advantage—the poetry used has never been published before. The winner goes on to compete in the World Memory Championships, in Kuala Lumpur later this year. (Con Edison Auditorium, 4 Irving Pl., at 14th St. For more information, visit www.usamemorychampionship.com. March 11, from 9 to 5.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

From the time it opened, in 1907, until its closing, last year, the Plaza Hotel was a centerpiece in the mythology of New York, a status supported by the writing of F. Scott Fitzgerald and the social climbing of Truman Capote. Bits and pieces of the Plaza mystique will go up for sale at **Christie's** on March 15, including several chandeliers, a giant humidor that once sat in the Oak Room, and a tomato-red bellman's uniform, complete with cap. On the following day, the house holds one of its occasional "first open" sales; the category, inaugurated last spring, features works by contemporary artists aimed at newer, younger collectors. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ On March 16, **Sotheby's** holds its annual auction of Israeli and international art, which includes not only lush, elegiac depictions of what was then still British Palestine by Reuven Rubin and two dreamy canvases by Chagall but also abstract compositions by Arieh Aroch and Mordecai Ardon. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Phillips** returns to form with "Under the Influence," an extensive selection of contemporary works to be auctioned on March 13-14. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.) ♦ The work of more than two thousand artists will be represented on March 10-13 at the **Armory Show**, the prestigious annual fair of contemporary art held at Piers 90 and 92. (Twelfth Ave. between 50th and 52nd Sts. 212-645-6440.)



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
LIFE OF THE PARTY

March 30

The producers behind the screen-to-stage hit "Hairspray" move forward in time with their Broadway adaptation of the Drew Barrymore–Adam Sandler eighties lovefest, "The Wedding Singer." John Rando directs. (212-239-6200.)

MOVIES
FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

March 22–April 2

The thirty-fifth installment of the "New Directors/New Films" series features thirty films from around the world, including "First on the Moon," Alexey Fedorchenko's mockumentary about a 1938 Soviet spaceflight; "Look Both Ways," a drama from Australia by Sarah Watt, about a young woman obsessed with disaster; and the 2006 Sundance prize-winning "Quinceañera." (www.filmlinc.com; 212-875-5600.)

NIGHT LIFE
OFF THE DOLE

April 14

The English ensemble UB40, best known for its mid-eighties reggae version of Neil Diamond's "Red Red Wine," returns to the States for the first time in seven years. They have a politically charged new album, "Who You Fighting For?," and a show at Irving Plaza. (212-777-6800.)

ART
PIE IN THE SKY

April 25–Oct. 29

When the snow and ice thaw, the Met's Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden reopens. This year, four sculptural installations will be provided by Cai Guo-Qiang, a Chinese artist who often works in gunpowder. Drinks (including cocktails) and snacks will be available in the garden, which may be useful for visitors waiting for the arrival of "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed explosion piece. (212-535-7710.)

DANCE
MYTHOLOGICAL MOVES

April 27–May 6

The choreographer Richard Move's "The Show (Achilles Heels)" gets its New York première at the Kitchen. Featuring Deborah Harry as a singing Athena, the piece explores the complex life and loves of the ill-fated warrior. (212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

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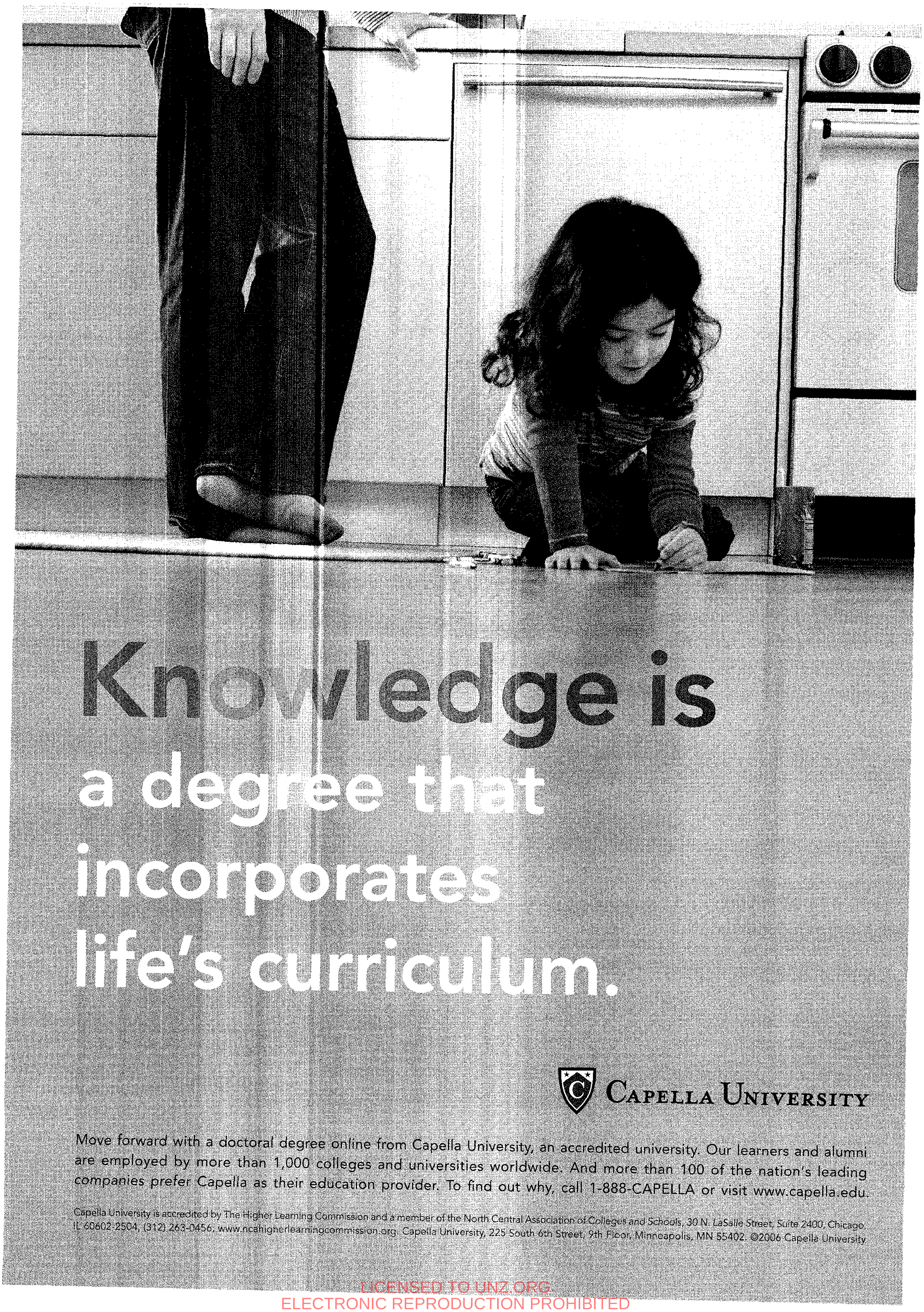

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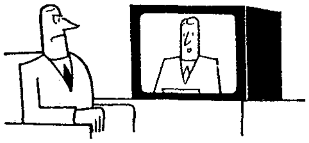
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

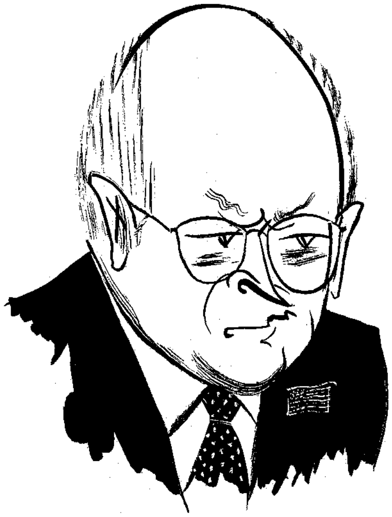
COMMENT
VEEP DOO-DOO



According to a CBS News poll released last Monday, the "favorability" rating of Vice-President Dick Cheney has sunk to a new low. How low a low? Well, that evening, Jon Stewart, as part of the buildup to the "Daily Show" star's going global on Oscar Sunday, was the guest on CNN's "Larry King Live." When King barked out the number—"Cheney eighteen per cent"—Stewart, citing another well-known poll result, observed solemnly, "Four out of five dentists surveyed recommend sugarless gum for their patients who chew gum." That is, the proportion of Americans who have a favorable opinion of Cheney is outweighed by the proportion of dentists who recommend sugary gum for their patients who chew gum.

The Vice-Presidency isn't what it used to be. No one bothered to rate the favorability of Garret Hobart, Charles Dawes, or Alben Barkley. But the clout of that once legendarily insignificant office has been growing for half a century. In his time, Walter Mondale was history's most powerful Vice-President. So was Al Gore in his. But Cheney is an order of magnitude different. For a number of reasons—his bureaucratic ruthlessness, his domineering influence over a feckless President who seems fated to remain forever inexperienced, his will to power combined with an alleged lack of ambition to succeed his nominal boss—he is universally agreed to be one of the two most powerful officials in the executive branch of the federal government, though it is not universally agreed which one. Truly, this is the Bush-Cheney Administration, in alphabetical order. The hyphen looks like a coy equal sign—not the towhook it was for Clinton-Gore, Reagan-Bush, Carter-Mondale, and Nixon-Agnew, to say nothing of Hoover-Curtis and Roosevelt-Garner.

That same CBS News poll put President Bush's favorability rating at twenty-nine per cent, also a personal worst. It would be natural to attribute the eleven-point gap to the unpleasantness two weeks earlier at the Armstrong ranch, in Texas. Among respectable commentators, the predominant view of that unfortunate occurrence has been that it was much ado about not very much. As scandals go, this was, like the Vice-President's lunchtime refreshment, small beer. An accident, nothing more. A private matter, essentially.



As some conservatives noted, no one died at Armstrong, unlike at Chappaquiddick in 1969 (or Weehawken in 1804). As no conservatives noted, unlike at the Watergate, no one at the ranch set out to commit a standard-issue crime; unlike in the Iran-Contra case, no one traded arms for hostages, illegally funded foreign guerrillas, or lied to Congress. A trivial offense, if offense it was, was followed by an outsized, politically tinged overreaction. In this sense, the Armstrong gunplay was more like the Clinton-Lewinsky business, although the overreactions were on different scales: a weeklong cable-TV brouhaha versus a yearlong vendetta featuring prosecutorial skulduggery, the expenditure of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars, and the culminating grotesquerie of impeachment and acquittal.

Now that the Armstrong incident has receded into the mists of time, where it can be calmly considered in historical perspective, the shotgunning of Harry Whittington, in itself, does indeed appear as of less than global significance. To be sure, certain details of the original competing narratives turn out to have been slightly askew, adding up to a political wash. "Cheney shot an old man in

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

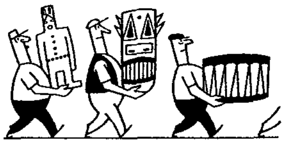
the face," for example. Yes, Whittington is full of years—seventy-eight of them—but the suggestion of decrepitude is misleading; he is a still-practicing (and public-spirited) lawyer in robust health. And he was shot not only in the face but also, we now know, in the chest. (He had a heart attack the way Nancy Kerrigan had a knee attack.) If the shooting was no big deal, its aftermath may nevertheless be said to have shed light on that hoary Republican favorite, the character issue. No doubt it is an ignorant urban prejudice to suggest that there is something distasteful about taking pleasure in killing or maiming dozens of inoffending, pen-raised birds whose only taste of freedom comes in the last few moments of their lives, as Cheney has done in the past. But his post-shooting behavior at the ranch—failing to report the incident promptly to the public (and, in detail, to the police), opting for the cocktail shaker and the dinner table instead of accompanying his friend to the hospital, dispatching surrogates to blame the shootee—did not enhance his reputation for decency.

In the previous CBS News poll, taken pre-shooting, in January, Cheney's favorability rating was twenty-three per cent—a truer measure of what might be called his underlying unpopularity. Cheney is Bush without the charm, the religiosity, the Michael Gerson speech texts, and the Presidential sheen. What he personifies, above all, is the raw reality of Bush's signature policies, all of which he has had a strong hand in creating. There are the giant tax cuts for the rich, especially the very rich. ("We won the midterms," Cheney told Bush's economic team, according to the journalist Ron Suskind, when another such cut was on the table after the 2002 congressional elections. "This is our due.") There is the related, and enormous, budget deficit, which will necessitate another $800-billion rise in the debt limit by the middle of this month if the government is to avoid defaulting on its obligations. ("Deficits don't matter," Cheney once explained.) There is the strategically and morally disastrous misconduct of the "war on terror," including authorized torture, defiantly unlawful domestic surveillance, and habitual, self-defeating contempt for allied opinion and international instruments. There is the toxic combination of reflexive secrecy and the political use of secrets, as in the Scooter Libby affair. There is, in place of an energy policy, obeisance to the oil industry—and thus to the petrocracy of the Middle East. (Conservation, according to Cheney, is "a personal virtue.") Above all, there is the terrible war in Iraq, undertaken on the basis of faulty, willfully distorted, sometimes falsified intelligence and now about to enter its fourth year, with no end in sight to the bloodshed and chaos. ("I think they're in the last throes, if you will, of the insurgency," Cheney said last June.) Against this background, the figure of twenty-three per cent is not shockingly low. It's shockingly high.

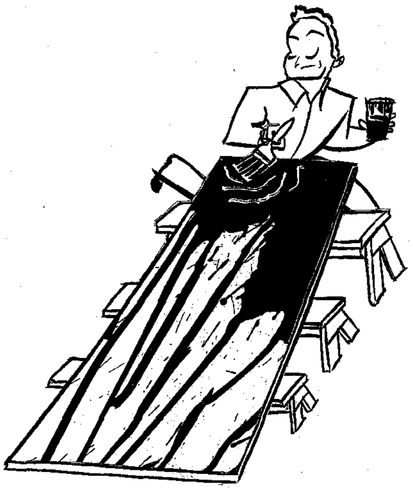
Quoting "senior G.O.P. sources," *Insight*, an obscure but well-connected Washington "news magazine," asserted last week that Cheney will "probably" be eased into retirement after November's congressional elections. That seems far-fetched. Bush, who has pushed his biological father beyond the periphery of his official circle, is unlikely to do the same to the substitute he acquired when Cheney, entrusted with the task of finding George W. Bush a running mate, found himself. "There is a higher father that I appeal to," Bush famously told Bob Woodward three years ago. He wasn't talking about Cheney, but he might as well have been. George W. Bush is far more deferential to Cheney (draft evader, Yale dropout, and tough-guy conservative) than to George H. W. Bush (war hero, Yale Phi Beta Kappa, and kinder, gentler moderate). If, come next year, Cheney really does resign his office "for reasons of health," he will have done so, almost certainly, for reasons of health.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THE CREATIVE LIFE
THE POUR



At five o'clock on a recent Monday afternoon, the artist Barnaby Furnas was in his Brooklyn studio, getting ready to start what he called "the pour" on a very large painting. Twenty-seven feet long by eleven and a half feet wide, propped horizontally on sawhorses of graduated height so that one end was about three feet lower than the other, the canvas virtually filled the room, leaving only a foot or so on either side for Furnas and his two assistants, Sarah Eaves and Jared Preston, to maneuver. The painting, called "Red Sea," had been requested by Marianne Boesky, Furnas's dealer, who hoped it would be the largest work at the Armory Show, the international art fair that opens on March 10th. Like "Apocalypse," an equally vast Furnas painting, which was displayed in the window of Lever House, on Park Avenue, last fall, this one's dominant color would be a dark, visceral red that looked startlingly like blood.



Barnaby Furnas

"I think these big blood floods are absolutely timely," said Furnas, whose red hair is several shades lighter than the glass of red wine that he was holding. "For some time, I've been doing battle pictures, and people shooting people, and now this—which is about as clear as I can get. It's about things going wrong, everything collapsing. In a way, that's reassuring, at least in painting, because there are no boundaries, there's no abstraction versus representation—everything can be both." He said this cheerfully, without apocalyptic overtones. Furnas, who is thirty-two, seems to like talking about his work almost as much as he likes making it. "It'll take us about an hour to do the pour," he said. "We'll come back when it dries, in a day or so, and do a couple more pours, and then, once the red is all down, we'll mask it off

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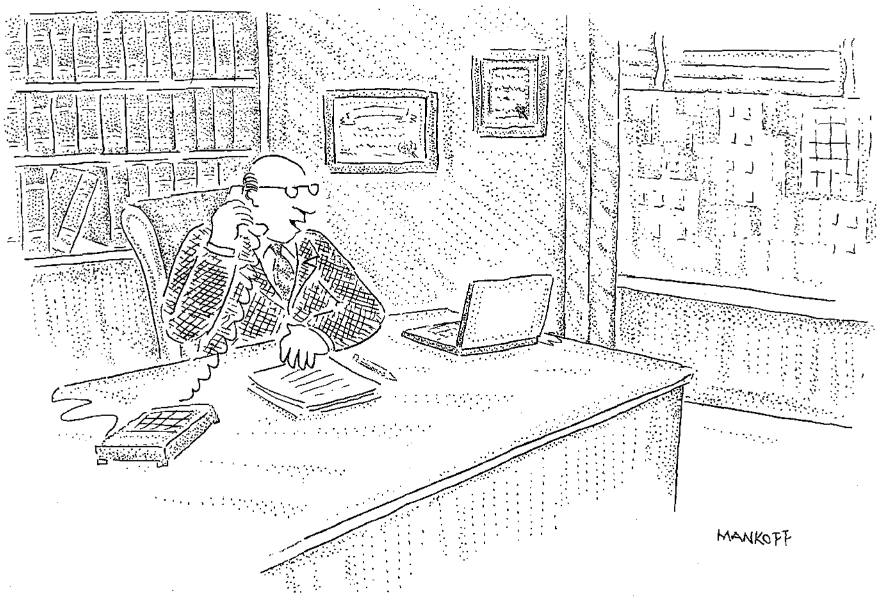


"Act of God? Not a problem—we sue God."

• •

and do the sky. The whole thing will be done by Thursday."

Furnas and his assistants had already done a lot of work on the canvas. Stretching it and priming it with four coats of gesso had taken a couple of weeks, and the whole middle section, from front to end, was covered with a tracery of meandering, threadlike lines in several shades of indelible ink—green, blue, black, yellow—which would bleed through the washes of red paint as it dried. "We did this today, with hypodermic needles," Furnas explained. "They're quietly selling them in drugstores now. The needles are cheap, but they make this gorgeous line, very rich. I sent Sarah to Duane Reade for them last time, and I also asked her to pick up baby formula for me"—Furnas and his wife, Andrea Rooke-Ley, have a fifteen-month-old daughter—"and they gave her this look, like 'Oh, you poor girl.'"

A young blond woman arrived. It was Marianne Boesky, effervescent with anticipation. She put on disposable white coveralls and prepared to join in the pour.

Furnas started at the high end of the canvas, not pouring but slathering on water-based Mars Black with sweeps of a wide brush. He switched to a dark red, laying it down quickly, and sometimes flinging it out in Pollock-like arcs. Sarah and Jared went into action with plastic spritz bottles, spraying water on the paint to make it spread and flow down the inclined plane. Boesky, equipped with a bottle of her own, followed their lead. The canvas began to look like a river of blood, dark and murky at the bottom, shading to a brighter and more lurid red in the middle. It was happening very fast, and changing from one second to the next—streaks of different red combining and separating, and running down to the lower end, where they dripped off the canvas into pails and other receptacles. After fifteen minutes, the whole midsection of the canvas was covered. The hypodermic ink lines had vanished. "I think that's good, Sarah," Furnas said. "Let's stop with the water."

Furnas surveyed the canvas and tried to explain how blood had become his motif. "Basically, I wanted to do history paintings, and battle paintings," he said. "But I was having trouble painting figures. I was particularly frustrated with the faces and the hands, and as a way of getting around that I'd paint someone being shot, and then I didn't have to worry. Like, I'm having trouble with this hand—*splat!* And that was interesting. It's red paint, and it's also blood. And then I was off and running, because it became like a game to me. When I was a kid, growing up in a kind of ghetto commune in Philadelphia, I would do elaborate battle pictures. I'd lie on the floor with my little pencil and draw all these men and cannons. I could just set it all up and then actually shoot—fire the guns, play it. That's still the basic idea here. You pour red paint and have this incredible formalist experience, and you can also play the picture. You've got a foot in both worlds. It's really happening."

"And he was raised by a Quaker," Boesky observed. "Which adds to the naughtiness." Furnas's naughtiness has deep roots. As a teen-ager in Philadelphia, he was arrested so often for spray-painting graffiti in subway tunnels that he had to do a thousand hours of community service—most of which took the form of scrubbing off graffiti.

Furnas started moving around the canvas again. "We lost a lot of ink," he said. "It got picked up by the paint. No big deal. We'll do the sky in one or two coats." A faint image of a yellow sun was perceptible in the area where the sky would go. "The sun keeps it out of the realm of abstraction," Furnas said.

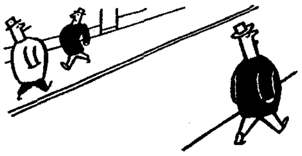
After a few more slatherings of paint, Furnas was ready to knock off. His wife and Boesky's husband, Liam Culman, were expected any minute. "My husband is a total philistine," said Boesky, whose father is Ivan Boesky. "Liam is a Wall Street trader, but he loves Barnaby, and Barnaby loves the bourgeois life my husband loves. They play squash together at the Racquet Club." When the spouses arrived, everyone went off to Peter Luger for a celebratory dinner of rare steak and red wine.

"I'm going this way," Furnas said, examining the layers of red paint on his hands. "I'm not going to wash it off."

—*Calvin Tomkins*

NEW HAVEN POSTCARD

LOCALS



In 1646, the townspeople of New Haven, Connecticut, feeling squeezed by the neighboring settlements of Boston, to the north, and New Amsterdam, to the south, sent a ship full of

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MOZART
2006 250th ANNIVERSARY

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All of Austria is celebrating W. A. Mozart's 250th anniversary in the year 2006.
Join in the celebration! At one of the numerous Mozart events in Vienna and Salzburg! The Salzburg Festival, for example, is featuring "Figaro's Wedding" with Anna Netrebko starring as Susanna. Or visit one of the performances of "Idomeneo" at the new Mozart opera house Theater an der Wien in Vienna.

The Marriage of Figaro – Salzburg Festival
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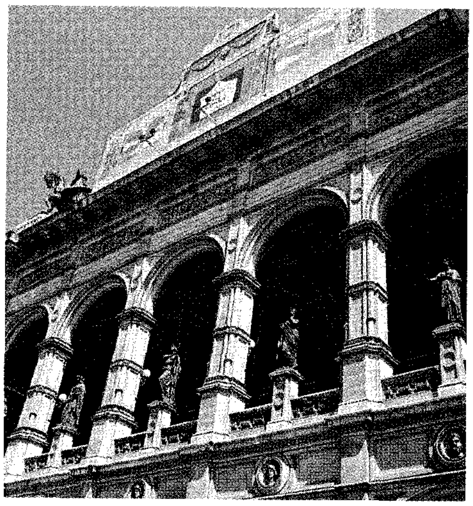

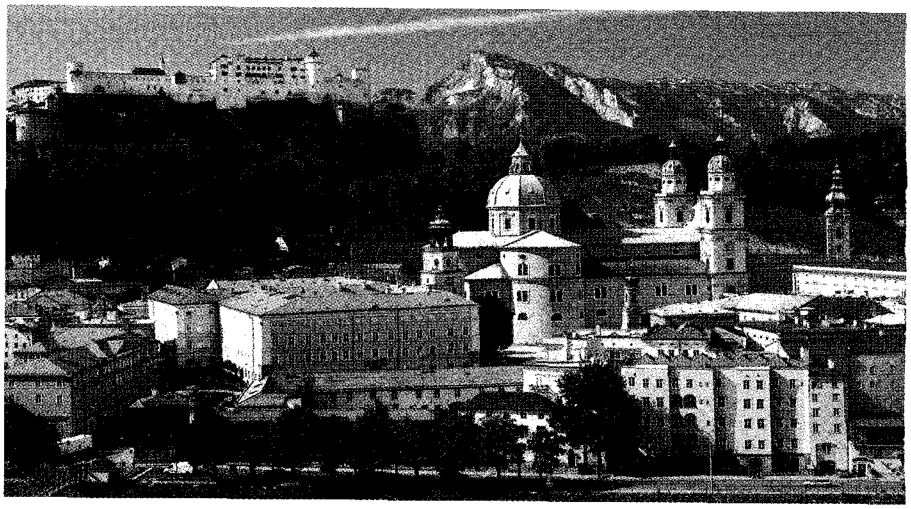

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! MR. MOZART!

Along with the whole world, Austria is celebrating Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 250th birth anniversary throughout 2006. In the thirty-five short years of his life, the prodigy, whose music was once described by conductor Bruno Walter as "next to God," composed more than six hundred known works, from serenatas and symphonies, to oratorios, concertos, and operas.

The cities of Vienna and Salzburg have created an impressive year-round festival program. His native city, Salzburg, is celebrating the momentous occasion, where over a span of nearly six weeks, all the musical genius's twenty-two works composed for the stage will be presented during the Salzburg Festival, among other events planned.

Not surprisingly, Vienna, where Mozart maintained residence and composed many of his most significant works, will commemorate his anniversary later this year with the "New Crowned Hope" festival which comprises new commissions. An abridged program of these two great cities' festivities follows.

TRACING HIS STEPS

- **Austrian Airlines** offers flexible and value-priced "Mozart Memories" packages to Vienna and Salzburg starting at $949. Call the Austrian Airlines Vacation Center at **800-790-4682** or visit austrianair-vacations.com.
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Mozart masses at Salzburg Cathedral, St. Peter's Abbey, Franciscan Church, and Pilgrimage Church

Through November, 2006
"The Best of Mozart" concert series, Salzburg

Through December 5, 2006–Vienna State Opera
"Così fan tutte"
"Don Giovanni"
"The Magic Flute"
"The Marriage of Figaro"
Requiem Mass in D minor, K. 626

Through December 12, 2006–Vienna Volksoper
"The Magic Flute"
"The Marriage of Figaro"
"La clemenza di Tito"
"Don Giovanni"
"Così fan tutte"
Mozart Soiree

Through December 26, 2006–Landestheater Salzburg
"La finta giardiniera"
"The Magic Flute"

Through January 7, 2007
"Viva! Mozart" exhibition, Salzburg

March 17–September 17, 2006
"Mozart 2006" exhibition at the Albertina Museum, Vienna

May 7–June 18, 2006
Vienna Festival concerts

May 12–June 18, 2006
Vienna Festival, Rathausplatz
"The Magic Flute"
"Così fan tutte"

June 2–5, 2006
Salzburg Festival – Whitsun + Baroque –"Approaching Mozart"

July 23–August 31, 2006
All Mozart's operas at the Salzburg Festival

October–December, 2006
"New Crowned Hope" festival, Vienna

October 22–November 11, 2006
Sacred Music Festival, Salzburg

Visit mozart2006.net for more information.

MOZART 2006 250th ANNIVERSARY

their finest wares and personages to England, to assert their primacy as a New World trading center. The ship sank. In the intervening years, as the locals rarely hesitate to tell you, New Haven gave us such invaluable commodities as the cotton gin, the Frisbee, and clam pizza, but its commercial and cultural standing never recovered; to many, it is little more than a university town.

And yet, Leslie Kuo was insisting the other day, New Haven remains as vital a city as any. Just look at all its colorful characters—ubiquitous layabouts and downtown clerks with nicknames like Frenchy, Smelly, Icebucket, Titanium Joe, Casablanca Man, and Sixteen-Year-Old Liz. Kuo, who graduated from Yale in 2003 with a degree in biology and then stuck around, spent two years creating a deck of trading cards to celebrate these and other local eminences. The cards, which feature black-and-white photographs on one side and biographical data ("Most likely to be seen: ___"; "Known for: ___") on the reverse, are now sold in packs of ten at independent bookstores.

You know the type. For instance, there is Kyle Mullins, a gentle thirty-five-year-old with thick sideburns and a long, Merlinesque goatee, who works at the favored record shop and seems to know everyone. Kyle's father visited him once and, during the course of a coffee break, was so startled by all the strangers stopping to pay their respects that he asked, "What are you, the *mayor* of this town?"

Like Kyle, John DeStefano, the actual mayor, merited a trading card, as did four of DeStefano's previous opponents, including one, Bill Saunders, who crashed a 2001 mayoral debate in drag, dressed as his alter ego, Little Miss Mess-Up, and another, Roger Uihlein, who received just nine votes, but who wrote a loving poem, "New Haven Is an Island," in which he likens his native city to a phoenix rising "on a dead-end vacant lot."

There are sixty local characters in the set, and the selection process, as Kuo explained, while leading a walking tour of downtown New Haven, was necessarily subjective. Jim Martin, whom Kuo described as "our second- or third-oldest punk," made the cut, whereas "that dude who hangs out across the street from Starbucks," and "this kid named Gadget," did not. (Martin works for Cesar Pelli, the city's most prominent architect, and the designer of the world's second-tallest buildings, the Petronas Towers, in Kuala Lumpur.)

Everyone has his favorites. At Rudy's bar, the old haunt of Garry Trudeau, a former resident who calls New Haven "the new Jerusalem" thumbed through one of Kuo's decks, trying to pick out familiar faces. "He's a classic—an absolute classic," said the man, who has been living for the past several years in San Francisco. He was referring to Dennis Thompson, whose card identifies him as a sushi chef and skateboarder known for wearing unwashed clothes.

"You have the flower guy, don't you?" he asked Kuo.

Yes—and the "flower lady," too. Annette Walton, who wanders the streets selling carnations for a dollar apiece, said that she has even autographed a few cards for her customers.

Over at a café called Koffee?, meanwhile, Floatin' Fred (who is not to be confused with Freddy B.) was holding court, dressed in black, with cowboy boots and a Kangol hat. Fred, who is forty-six, was born in New Haven, which he regards as a "minor major" among American cities. He has a local-access TV show on which he "conducts the music in his head."

"Ah, Louie the Italian," Fred said, glancing at the card for Louie Storvino, another lifer. "You know, for years I thought he was an Arab." (Louie's famously grumpy demeanor recently got him banned from Rudy's, by decree of Omer the Belgian, one of the bar's owners and another trading-card honoree.)

By Fred's reckoning, the most glaring omission from the deck was Irv Pinsky, a personal-injury attorney who offers free legal advice to pedestrians on his lunch break. "You know, if you think you *might* slip, or you *might* fall, give Irv a call," Fred said. "Ever see those umbrellas that say '1-800-LAWYERS'? You dial that number and Irv's phone rings, right here in New Haven."

—*Ben McGrath*

DEPT. OF DIPLOMACY
PARTY ON?

Each February, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations is obliged, by diplomatic etiquette, to throw a cocktail party in celebration of the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This year, it couldn't have fallen at a less opportune moment. On the day of the party, Iran's government accelerated its nuclear program, and one of the country's leading newspapers put out a call for cartoons mocking the Holocaust. The beleaguered staff at the Iranian Mission went ahead with the party anyway. They had invited representatives from most of the countries of the world, along with a few of the Iranian exiles in the city whose exile was not caused by the very revolution the party was commemorating, for kebabs and non-alcoholic drinks.

The reception was held in the Delegates' Dining Room, on the fourth floor of the U.N. Building. The only indications that it was a party to celebrate Iran were the smell of basmati rice and the sight of some women wearing hijab. (Invitations to Iranian guests included an insert, in Farsi, politely requesting that they observe Islamic dress.) The Iranians gathered in clutches and largely ignored the foreigners. The foreign diplomats were also in groups: the Africans together, the Spanish-speakers in one corner, the Arabs in the back of the room, drinking Perrier. The Iranian Ambassador, the charming and elegant Javad Zarif, stood at the door and welcomed each guest.

About an hour into the reception, the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, arrived with a small entourage. He spent a few minutes chatting amiably with the Iranian Ambassador and his deputies, and then made a halfhearted attempt to work the room. "Hello, Mr. Ambassador," he said to a guest in a band-collared shirt. "Good to see you," to another. "How very good to see you," he said to yet another dignitary. Flanked by two burly U.N. bodyguards, he headed toward the buffet.

But food was out of the question, for he was surrounded by diplomats and guests who couldn't resist the opportunity to get a word in. "Your Excellency," one Iranian said, pushing his way past an ambassador or two. "Your Excellency, why can't you mediate between Iran and the U.S.? Why can't you organize a conference to repair relations between the two countries?"

Annan seemed taken aback, but he stopped briefly and listened. "I hear you," he said, attempting to move on.

The Iranian was not satisfied. "Pick a day, a date, and we'll organize a conference," he said, his voice getting louder.

"I hear you," Annan said. "I hear your plea."

"No, pick a date, anytime, even two in the morning if that's the only time you are free."

Annan showed no signs of irritation. "Send a letter to my office," he said.

"Pick a date!" the Iranian continued.

"O.K.," Annan said. "How about September of 2008?" And, with that, he gracefully moved toward the exit and left the reception.

—*Hooman Majd*

TRIBES
LAST BOHEMIANS

"My life's an open book," Harriet Sohmers Zwerling declared the other night. She was wearing a maroon bustier and Pharaonic blond bangs, and was leaning on a cane. Zwerling, the writer and *grande horizontale*, has been a sort of den mother—she would get smashed and have everyone over for lima beans—to five decades of Greenwich Village misfits. Recently, she appeared in a documentary, "Still Doing It," about sex and older women. "Every time it's shown, I get e-mail from young guys who want to get it on with me," she said. "Which is wonderful. I'm seventy-seven *fucking* years old." Zwerling was in the gallery at Westbeth, the artists' complex on Bethune Street, at a party for the opening of an exhibit of photographs, "The Last Bohemians," and the publication of her friend Edward Field's new memoir, "The Man Who Would Marry Susan Sontag." The book is every bit as gossipy an accounting of lives, his own and others', as its title suggests. (The Man, by the way, was the critic Alfred Chester.) Few of Field's cohorts were offended by his dredging up of youthful indiscretions. If profligacy has been their social imperative, its moral corollary is unflinching tolerance. They seemed highly entertained, and even a little proud.

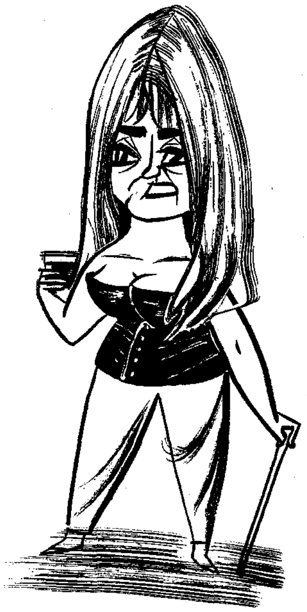
"In those days, I lived in a former coalbin, which I shared with Jean Garrigue, on Ninth Street," Stanley Moss, the poet and art dealer, said. "If I went to bed before four o'clock in the morning, I thought I was doing something awful." He went over to say hello to Field, who was sitting behind a table, set with a few books and a cigar box for contributions. "We met," Field said, "because a friend was having an affair with a guy who was married to a woman Stanley had had an affair with."

"A wonderful thing about Edward," Karl Bissinger, a ninety-one-year-old resident of Westbeth, said. "He had a friend that he lived with. The friend left him and, just after, went blind. Edward is still taking care of him after all these years." Bissinger, a fashion photographer who abandoned his career during the Vietnam War to help draftees escape to Canada, was referring to Field's partner of forty years, Neil Derrick. "I'm very glad to see you," Bissinger said, turning to a sweaty, hulking man in a "Poetry at Gunpoint" T-shirt who had flecks of fried egg in his wiry white beard.

Bissinger and the man, Ira Cohen—star-stream poet, shaman, mythographer, ex-publisher of the exorcist journal *Gnaoua*, bat-eater—shook hands and talked for a while. Cohen began to reminisce. "I've known Edward since the sixties," he said. "I met him and Neil in Tangier many years ago. We liked to smoke and hang around and enjoy the Socco Chico, the little square in Tangier. It was full of policemen, hustlers, smugglers, rich ladies. Those were the slapstick Beckettian dog days. I've also lived in Kathmandu and San Francisco. They all have a similar magic center of vibration."

Field, at the table, continued to greet well-wishers. He regarded one of them, a trim Creole man in a suit and sweater, with amazement. "That was Basil Browne," he said. "He was in my Greek class at N.Y.U. in 1946." Field and Derrick live on the third floor of Westbeth; their close friend the anthropologist and rumored cannibal Tobias Schneebaum, to whom the exhibit was dedicated, lived on the fourth. He died in September. His apartment is being kept intact until the Met can catalogue his collection of Asmat artifacts. "I'm watering Tobias's plants," Field said. "I met him at Yaddo in 1955. He was a painter before he became an explorer of the jungles of the world.

"This is Ana Maria Vandellos," he went on, grabbing a dignified woman by the arm. "She's the only straight woman in the group." (Vandellos, it turns out, was once married to Stanley Moss.) Field pointed to a photograph on the wall. "That was the two of us in 1951, at a party for a play based on a Christopher Isherwood book." The picture showed a jaunty Field, leaning in on Vandellos, who was smoking a cigarette and holding a tumbler.



Harriet Sohmers Zwerling

Across the room, Harriet Sohmers Zwerling was finishing a plastic cup of red wine. A woman approached and let Zwerling know that she and her friend were leaving.

"We want to have a hamburger at the Corner Bistro," she said.

"It's so crowded," Zwerling said. "We're going to Philip Marie. It's not gourmet, but they have very nice drinks. The Bistro is all college kids now. It's not very interesting," she said. And that was the end of it.

—*Lauren Collins*

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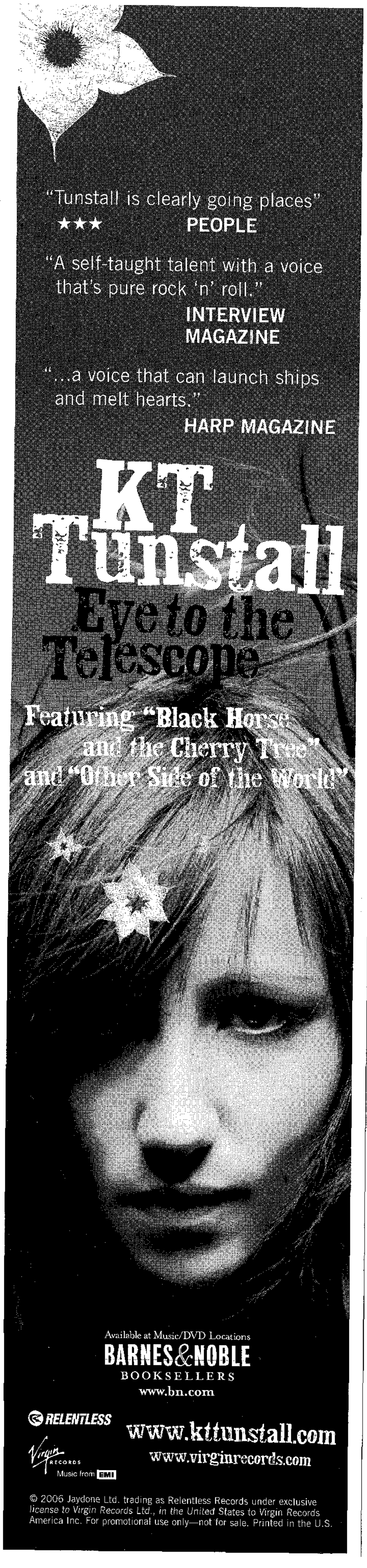

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OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

GREEN GOLD

The return of absinthe.

BY JACK TURNER

By Ted Breaux's estimate, there are only a few dozen people alive who have had the opportunity to taste authentic absinthe, the drink whose notoriety defined the Belle Époque and which has been banned in many countries for almost a century. It is a number that he is determined to increase. On a crisp, clear fall morning, he greeted me at the Combier distillery, in Saumur, in France's Loire Valley. It is here that Breaux, a thirty-nine-year-old environmental chemist from Louisiana, is trying to reverse-engineer absinthe, precisely as it was made a hundred years ago.

In the near-distance, the towers of Saumur's castle rose above the slate roofs of the town like an image from a medieval Book of Hours. On the street outside, a pair of young men in military fatigues and black berets cycled past before disappearing into the dressage yards of the adjacent Cadre Noir, the élite equestrian academy that has taught the French cavalry since the eighteenth century. Across the way stood the commandant's house, an elegant Second Empire building cordoned off from the street with pink and red roses.

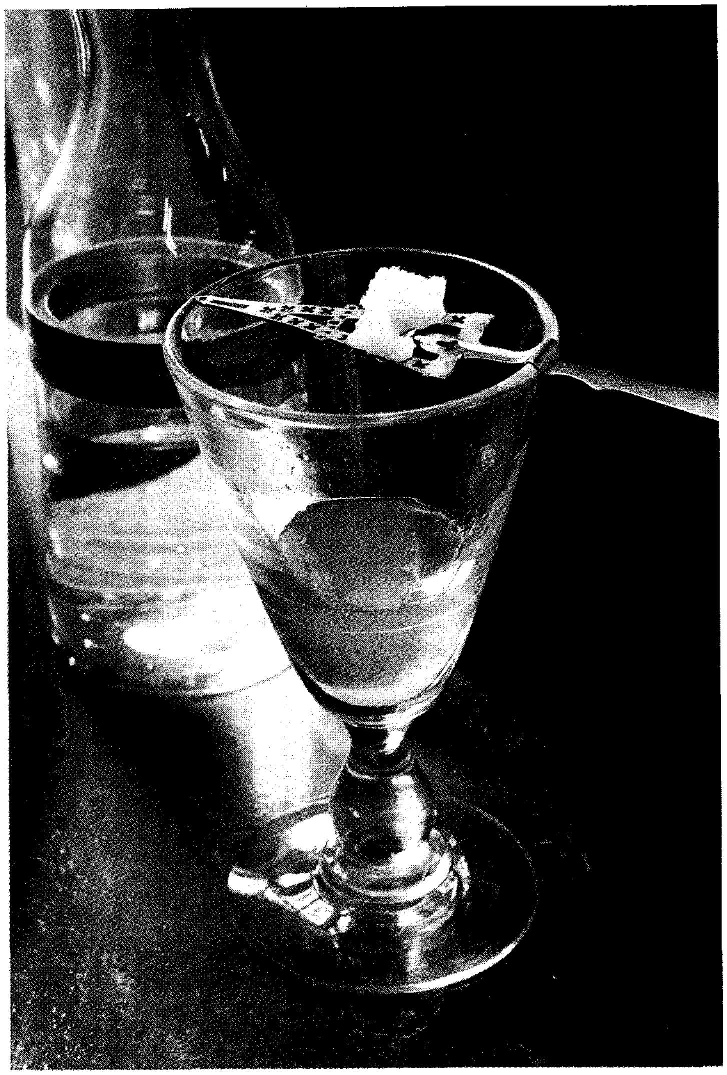
Like the castle and the Cadre Noir, the distillery, whose interior was designed by Gustave Eiffel, is a survivor from an earlier age. Breaux refers to it as "the Temple," and, as he took me past pallets of empty bottles and a row of potted lemon trees, there was certainly a resemblance to sacred architecture: one of the region's Romanesque chapels, perhaps, with their pale limestone walls and vaulted ceilings. The narrow doorway was surmounted by a rose window, and graceful arched windows ran along one wall beneath a steep slate roof. Instead of incense, the air was heavy with the aromas of anise, fennel, and lucerne and the sharp tang of alcohol. Breaux was preparing to distill a batch of his Verte Suisse 65, one of three absinthes that he makes based on vintage recipes.

The distillery was built in 1834, and though various features have been added, all its significant equipment predates the twentieth century. "It's an anachronism," Breaux said. Inside, it looks like something from a Jules Verne novel. A spaghetti tangle of pipes and tubes emerges from two rows of bulbous copper alembics that line the walls on either side. The stills were acquired in 1920, after the breakup of the Pernod Fils absinthe distillery in Pontarlier, in the French Jura, once the center of the absinthe industry. The Combier distillery is, literally, a museum; Breaux, who distills there every few months, has access to it in return for a small commission on every bottle he produces. During distillation, an occasional group of tourists wanders through, admiring the alembics. When I visited, sacks of herbs were stacked in every available space; there was a container of grape alcohol the size of a small car, and an electric pump. Near the entrance stood an immense plastic tub of wormwood, absinthe's distinctive and contentious constituent, which, since the late nineteenth century, was held to cause insanity. Down the center of the room, suspended fifteen feet above the floor, ran a wrought-iron *passerelle*, or walkway, whose lacy gold-and-maroon ironwork clearly bore the signature of Gustave Eiffel. Since Combier began operating, techniques of distillation have moved on to embrace new technologies such as mechanized mixing and electronic temperature and pressure controls. But obsolescence is precisely what Breaux wants.

Breaux seems an unlikely man to revive a drink with such a fearsome reputation. Amiable, muscled, and bespectacled, he is a picture of wholesomeness. His hobbies include sports-car restoration and the reworking of vintage-guitar circuitry. He has been nominated to be president of a society dedicated to the restoration of Marshall Bluesbreaker amplifiers. Among his published work is an article on Rickenbacker guitars called "Putting the Jangle Back in the Jingle." Breaux was dressed in jeans, a T-shirt, and a weathered leather jacket, one of the few items he had managed to salvage from his house, in New Orleans, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. He had left the city the morning before Katrina hit, taking with him a guitar, some vintage firearms, and a collection of hundred-year-old absinthes.

Breaux was born in New Orleans, which is also where the earliest American cocktails, like the Sazerac and the Hurricane, originated, and the only place in the United States where absinthe was ever really popular. In the French Quarter, people can still visit the Old Absinthe House, once celebrated for its absinthe frappés but now serving absinthe substitutes such as Pernod and Herbsaint, an anise liqueur native to the city. Breaux's interest began in 1993, when a colleague mentioned a noxious green drink that made people insane. Breaux turned for more information to the Merck Index, which had an entry describing absinthe as a liqueur that induced nervousness, stupor, convulsions, and death. He became hooked on the sheer implausibility of it all. "How could you ignore that?" he said. How could a deadly drink be so popular, and how could such a popular drink disappear so entirely? It was evident that, after a century of accumulating ignorance, the only real solution to the mystery was a matter of chemical forensics: to analyze and make the drink for himself.

Breaux is at heart a restorer. In his professional life, he is a chemist working for a private firm that specializes in the analysis and repair of environmental damage. In most cases, he spends his time inspecting damage caused by the petrochemical industry. "I take samples, I analyze, I look to see what the constituents of concern are," he said. "I look for the source of those constituents." Then he heads back to the lab and tries to figure out a way of restoring the status quo ante. This is essentially what he is trying to do with absinthe. "There is nothing on the market that resembles the most popular liquor of the nineteenth century," he told me, "and I'm going to make it, just short of driving myself and any others crazy."



Nothing else has the same wow factor. Photograph by Hans Gissinger.

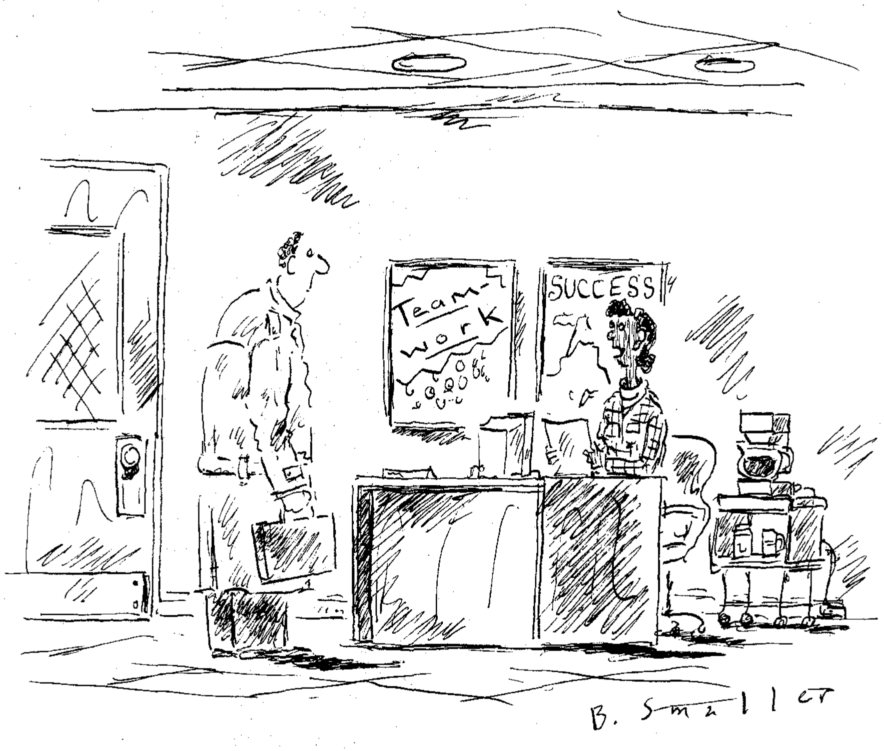
Breaux clambered up a stepladder and sealed an alembic shut by means of a stout, studded hatch, such as you might find on a diving bell. Inside was an olive-green mush of herbs that he had left to macerate the previous day. After soaking in grape alcohol for between twenty-four and forty-eight hours, the herbs release their flavors into the macerate, and distillation can begin. Breaux switched on the boiler, and steam began to heat the copper sleeve of the alembic.

According to Breaux, the process, much like any distillation, is essentially one of selection. His goal is to separate the good flavors from the bad—to "bring the perfumes forward" while leaving the heavy, acrid compounds behind. Wormwood is proverbially bitter—the vindictive God of Jeremiah says, "I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall"—and distillation of the macerate is the alchemical step that allows a sweet, floral fragrance to emerge.

As the temperature of the alembic rises, the alcohol and the aromas evaporate into a rounded receptacle above, known as a Moor's head. Then the mixture runs upward through a slender copper tube, the "swan's neck," where it gradually condenses. At Combier, the swans' necks arc and converge beneath Eiffel's airy *passerelle* in a cluster of bulbs and cylinders, where the distillate collects. There are no instruments to guide the process except several thermometers and a hydrometer, which measures the density—and hence the alcohol content—of the liquid emerging from the alembic. Breaux says that learning to use this cluster of tubes and piping has taken practice—"It's like learning to drive a new car"—but he feels that an authentic approach is crucial. Distilling a herbal liqueur is a more delicate matter than, say, obtaining grain spirits such as vodka or rye whiskey. The stills were made for absinthe in its heyday; every vessel, bulb, and bend has a purpose evolved from a century of experience.

As the alembic heated, Breaux began preparing the next day's batch. He handed me a small carpenter's saw and set me to work cutting up bundles of wormwood. As I sawed, the twigs crackled and snapped like dried lavender, giving off a fine dust that left a penetrating, bitter taste on my tongue. Meanwhile, Breaux loaded his other herbs, which he weighed in a plastic tub, into an empty alembic. He stomped on a sack of seeds, to crush them, and then heaved a burlap sack of a green, lucerne-like herb onto the scales. Breaux is evasive about exactly what herbs he uses. The current blend, the result of years of experiment, effectively determines the character of the final drink. He makes his absinthes from entirely natural ingredients, and there has been much speculation about what those ingredients are. In the small, partisan world of absintheurs—a loose fraternity that posts obsessively on Internet forums—some critics wonder if Breaux, being a chemist, might have secretly resorted to artificial means. Breaux impatiently dismisses such charges. "You can get enough sweetness if you know what you're doing," he says.

As he spoke, the first of the distillate, a clear, colorless liquid, emerged from the swan's neck. While we went on sawing, weighing, and sorting herbs, Breaux kept a close eye on the distillate as it flowed from the hydrometer chamber. Obtaining a satisfactory result requires developing a feel for the whole wheezing and hissing ensemble. Through the course of a distillation, Breaux must adroitly juggle the "head"—the first distillate to emerge—then the more full-bodied "heart," and, finally, the pungent tails, or "phlegm," while keeping a careful eye on the hydrometer. If he switches off the heat too early, the most aromatic compounds remain in the alembic; too late and the distillate is ruined by bitterness coming over from the macerate.



"You get five paid sick days and two disgruntled days."

By the afternoon, the distillate was coming through in a steady stream. Breaux checked the hydrometer regularly but, just as often, relied on the evidence of his tongue and finger, encouraging me to do the same. The flavor gradually deepened from the hot, clean, light taste of the first of the heads, all fire and floral notes, to something darker and more robust. Even after years of distilling, Breaux expresses wonder at the metamorphosis that occurs within a few dozen feet of copper piping. The liquid, he says, is "like poison going in but perfume coming out."

The invention of absinthe is traditionally credited to Dr. Pierre Ordinaire, a French Huguenot who fled France for the Val-de-Travers, a narrow, mountain-crowded strip of farmland in the Swiss Jura. Ordinaire made a living by riding up and down the valley on his horse, Roquette, hawking a tonic distilled from wormwood, fennel, and green anise. These are still the three essential ingredients of absinthe; other ingredients include hyssop, melissa, star anise, and coriander. (There is no single absinthe recipe, any more than there is a single way of making gin.) It is now known that similar drinks were made earlier, but it was Ordinaire who first distilled wormwood with fennel and anise, and who first marketed the drink.

In the following decades, several commercial producers sprang up in the valley and beyond, the most famous being Pernod Fils, which operated just across the French border, in Pontarlier. Its 136-proof absinthe was popular with the French Army in Algeria, who enjoyed it as an apéritif and used it to disinfect contaminated drinking water. When the soldiers returned from Africa, they brought a taste for absinthe back with them. Absinthe's popularity peaked in the final decades of the century, helped by the phylloxera outbreaks that decimated French vineyards in the eighteen-sixties and seventies. As the cost of wine and cognac soared, people switched to absinthe. During the craze that followed, absinthe came to be seen not merely as a drink but as a way of life, the elixir of bohemia. Drinking it became an elaborate ritual: a perforated spoon, often highly ornate, supported a sugar cube over a distinctive glass containing a "dose" of absinthe. Water was poured over the sugar into the absinthe, causing it to "louche," or turn a cloudy pale green. Absinthe and those who drank it became a favorite subject for painters from Degas to Picasso. Paul Verlaine developed the notion of absinthe as the drink of the artistic temperament, proclaiming, "For me, my only glory is a simple, ephemeral absinthe."

(Whether or not absinthe aided his intoxicated versifying, it probably helped dull the pain he suffered from syphilis, gonorrhea, rheumatism, and bronchitis.) Verlaine's fellow-poet and sometime lover Arthur Rimbaud was also a student at what he called the "Academy of Absomphe," fuelling his poetics of sensory disorder with the "sagebush of the glaciers." Toulouse-Lautrec went so far as to teach his pet cormorant to drink it. He carried his own dose in a hollowed-out cane and took it "diluted" with cognac, a combination he dubbed "the Earthquake."

In the increasingly conservative climate that prevailed in France at the end of the century, such antics did little to help absinthe's image. Alcoholism was not yet properly understood, and there was much confusion about absinthe's physiological effects. While bohemians asserted the drink's inspirational powers, a counter-myth spread that it somehow caused more harm than mere alcohol: a condition known as "absinthism." At a time when the temperance movement generally regarded wine as innocent, or even healthy, absinthe was singled out as especially noxious. People on both sides of the debate focussed on the role of the highly toxic oil of wormwood; this was thought, by enthusiasts, to be responsible for the drink's supposedly psychoactive properties, and, by critics, for its brain-rotting effect. Doctors blamed it for a range of social evils, including lunacy and degeneracy of the race. Flaubert, in the Dictionary of Received Opinion appended to his last novel, "Bouvard and Pécuchet," spoofed the prevailing tide of popular sentiment: "Absinthe: an extra-violent poison: one glass and you're dead. Journalists drink it while writing their articles. Has killed more soldiers than the Bedouins."

Then, in August, 1905, a Swiss farmer by the name of Jean Lanfray returned home from the fields and shot his wife and their two young daughters, before turning the gun, unsuccessfully, on himself. At the inquiry, much was made of the fact that Lanfray had consumed two glasses of absinthe on the morning of the murders. It counted for little that he had also drunk a cognac, a brandy-laced coffee, a crème de menthe, seven glasses of wine, and another litre of wine on returning home. A combination of hysteria and quasi-scientific claims turned popular opinion against absinthe. In 1907, four hundred thousand French citizens signed a petition, to the effect that "absinthe makes one crazy and criminal, provokes epilepsy and tuberculosis, and has killed thousands of French people. It makes a ferocious beast of man, a martyr of woman, and a degenerate of the infant, it disorganizes and ruins the family and menaces the future of the country." The following year, the Swiss voted, in a nationwide referendum, to ban absinthe, a ban that came into effect in 1910. Neuchâtel, home to the Val-de-Travers, was one of only two cantons to vote against the measure.

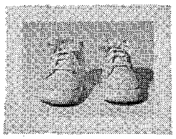
In the United States, even though the drink had never been particularly popular, the frenzy overseas made a ban inevitable. In 1912, the Department of Agriculture, having decided that absinthe was "one of the worst enemies of man," issued a ban that remains in force to this day. (As recently as 1999, a Navy circular threatened to court-martial any sailor found in possession of a bottle.) France, where the drink, despite widespread denunciations, remained most popular, eventually capitulated because of the First World War. In March, 1915, fearful of being overrun by a more vigorous nation, the French Chamber of Deputies voted to rid the country of the debilitating effects of endemic absinthism. "The absinthe drinker is content to crouch before the stalwart, honest, beer-bred Teuton," one writer commented. The ban was passed with an overwhelming majority. The great Pernod factory at Pontarlier was sold to Nestlé, which now uses it to manufacture strawberry milk.

Breaux's determination to reproduce absinthe in its authentic form intensified when he acquired, in 1996, a small supply of the liqueur dating from before the ban. Even today, there is a tiny market in this exquisitely rare and ruinously expensive drink—a vintage bottle typically sells for more than three thousand dollars. David Nathan-Maister, a British-based absinthe historian and collector who sells bottles to a tiny community of enthusiasts, refers to the "pre-ban," as it's known, as the "coelacanth of drinks." He finds most of the bottles he sells in Switzerland or the South of France, generally at estate sales in small towns. (In northern France, few cellars survived occupation by the German Army in the Second World War.) From time to time, other bottles crop up around the world, such as one found walled up in a hotel in Tasmania. Nathan-Maister says that they are popular with Hollywood clients looking to impress dinner guests. "Nothing else has the same wow factor," he says. "A Mouton-Rothschild '45 simply hasn't got it."

Breaux tasted his pre-ban absinthe, and performed a chemical analysis, to give him an idea of what he was aiming at. Through archival research, he found the "protocols"—recipes followed by the great nineteenth-century distilleries—and stayed late in his lab after work to make absinthe according to their instructions. His results, he recalls with a laugh, were not impressive: "What I had there didn't seem convincing." He began to realize that the knowledge communicable in a recipe was useless without the tricks of the trade that distillers failed to include in their protocols, perhaps unwilling to write them down. Breaux said, "I had to relearn everything they had learned over a century of business."

Other effects of the ban have been harder to reverse. The fields where wormwood once grew around Pontarlier are now crowded with dairy cattle, and Breaux has spent years finding supplies of herbs and learning how to handle them. He claims that other makers' efforts are often compromised by changing patterns of production. He points out that star anise, a common ingredient in modern Swiss absinthe (the drink was legalized in Switzerland last March), today comes mostly from China. Natural variations from one harvest to the next further complicate matters. Each batch is unique, and he compares the job of fitting his herbs together into a consistent product to assembling jigsaw pieces that constantly change shape.

By the time of Breaux's first efforts,



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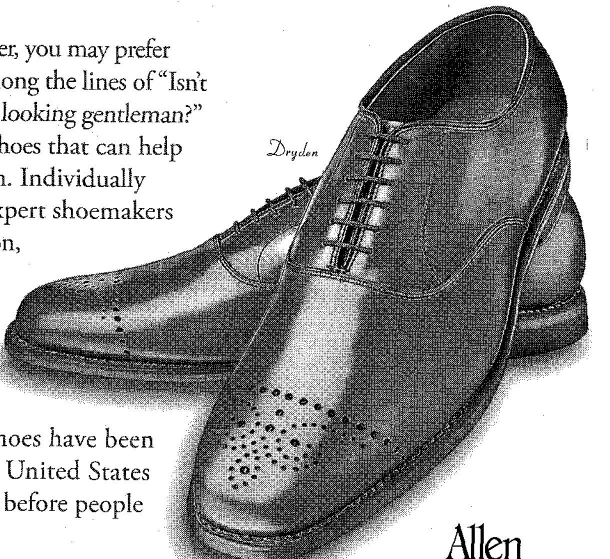

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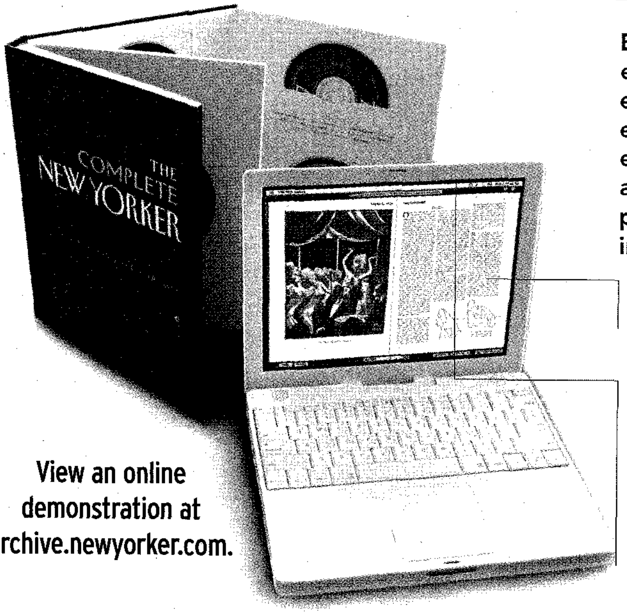

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interest in absinthe had been building steadily. After the ban, clandestine production continued in and around the Val-de-Travers, and absinthe still attracted admirers. Hemingway did much to burnish the drink's legend—in "For Whom the Bell Tolls," Robert Jordan refers to it as "liquid alchemy." The current revival of interest can be dated to 1994, when Radomil Hill, a seventy-five-year-old Czech, began to market a drink called Hill's Absinth Liquere. Many questioned whether this drink, colored a deep, vivid emerald, was absinthe in anything but name—and a misspelled version of the name at that—but there soon were dozens of imitators.

Whatever the content of his bottles, Hill was a shrewd marketer, and he succeeded in reaching both the Goth and frat-boy subcultures. The current trade takes place mostly on the Internet, thanks to a curious legal loophole. The Department of Agriculture's 1912 ban affected only sales and distillation of the drink; consumption and possession remain legal. Travellers returning to the U.S. with a bottle or customers buying it from Europe on the Internet are not guilty of any crime, though they could have their bottle confiscated.

To get a sense of the absinthes currently available, I visited Breaux's friend and distributor, Peter Schaf, in his apartment in the Montmartre district of Paris. The drapes and the sofa were a celadon green, and, in the window box, suspended above the Paris traffic, grew a wormwood plant. Schaf, tidy and bespectacled, looking more like a computer-science major than an absintheur, invited me to sit at a table cluttered with bottles, some ancient, some new, representing practically every absinthe available today.

Schaf disdains most modern absinthes, but during the next few hours he agreed to give me a tutorial. We began with Serpis, whose name and vivid red color evoked something dramatic and medicinal. "This is what Marilyn Manson drinks," Schaf said. He gave me some Spanish absinthe from 1955, a drink that Hemingway referred to. The taste was sweet, with a hint of licorice. This he followed with a scouring Portuguese *absinto* and a sweet, simple

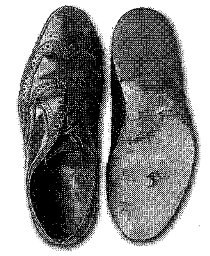
Swiss *bleue*—a liquor from the Val-de-Travers still known as a *clandestine,* even though it is no longer illegal—which tasted like a mountain breeze after a day in car-exhaust fumes.

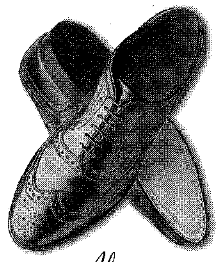
Next, Schaf produced a small, iodine-colored vial containing a sample of home-distilled American hooch. "What these guys are doing is really illegal," he said. It was vile, with a strong, acrid aftertaste that Schaf ascribed to home distillation over a naked flame. Then Schaf poured me a drink with a deep-green color, like a first-pressing olive oil. "Don't put water in this one," he said. The nose was almost nonexistent, but after drinking it I wondered for several moments if I would wretch. The bitterness of the drink was so extreme that it seemed to gouge a channel down my tongue toward my larynx. "That," Schaf said, grinning with the satisfied air of a teacher who's proved his point, "is what you get when you macerate."

He explained that the idea that absinthe should taste bitter is a misconception of the modern absinthe revival. Consumers associate unpalatability with authenticity, and assume that the worse the taste, the greater the effect. When wormwood—the second most bitter substance on earth, after rue—is soaked in alcohol, or macerated, it tastes very bitter. But distillation of a wormwood macerate—the process that Dr. Ordinaire hit upon—removes the bitter notes. Schaf speculates that most modern absinthes are not distilled, and are simply the result of mixing cheap grain or beet alcohol with various essences and flavorings.

Schaf knows that he and Breaux are squeezed between the market's low expectations and their own insistence on historical accuracy, and he worries that the acrid absinthes currently on the market may put people off the drink. Their business tactic has been to position their product as a gourmet drink, aimed at a niche market. Since starting production at Saumur, nearly two years ago, Breaux's company, Jade Liqueurs, has brought out three varieties of absinthe: Verte Suisse 65 is an attempt to faithfully re-create an absinthe made during the nineteenth century by the Swiss company C. F. Berger; Absinthe Édouard 72 mimics the taste of the drink distilled around the same time by Édouard Pernod; Nouvelle Orléans is made to Breaux's own recipe and is designed to approximate the kind of absinthe that might once have been made in his home town. The bottles have elaborate labels redolent of the Belle Époque and sell for nearly a hundred dollars—more if you order some of Jade's reproduction absinthe spoons and glassware. In countries where the retailing of absinthe is legal, such as England, Breaux's absinthe is stocked at upscale outlets, like Fortnum & Mason. Americans can order bottles through a couple of Internet retailers. Breaux makes only about five thousand bottles each year, not enough to satisfy demand, and says he's not interested in producing on a larger scale: "I want to make people realize that the drink is artisanal."

The name "wormwood" notwithstanding, and despite its woodlike texture when dried, *Artemisia absinthium* is not a wood but a leafy plant with delicate yellow flowers. The name comes from its supposed vermicidal properties—a cure ("wode") for worms. John Gerard, the English herbalist, wrote in his "Herball" of 1597 that wormwood "voideth away the wormes of the guts." By the late nineteenth century, this wholesome reputation had been all but buried, and a scientific consensus emerged, according to which absinthe was the source of grievous mental and bodily harm, because of the wormwood oil it contained. Administered in sufficient quantities, this compound is highly toxic, a point that nineteenth-century doctors and scientists liked to demonstrate by injecting guinea pigs with concentrated essence of wormwood and watching the animals' slow and agonizing death by convulsions. At the same time, the drink's defenders saw wormwood as the most probable cause of absinthe's purported lofty high. Wormwood was at once a source of danger and of delight. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the focus of the scientific debate had narrowed around the toxin thujone, which was isolated from wormwood oil—it is about sixty per cent thujone—and identified as the cause of the harmful





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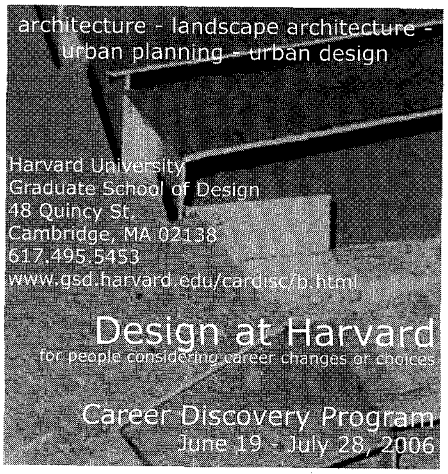
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effect. These days, it is a key element in absinthe's appeal. Postings on Internet discussion groups are full of tales of thujone-inspired highs, and several Czech producers tout the high thujone content of their product. Conversely, thujone also remains fundamental to the notoriety of absinthe and to its precarious legal status. (Only a couple of months ago, there was intense speculation about the role of absinthe in the disappearance of a young man who apparently fell from the side of a ship in the Mediterranean last summer, while on a honeymoon cruise.) When the French law pertaining to absinthe was revised, in 1988, it stipulated an upper limit of ten milligrams of thujone per litre in liquors sold as a "spirit" of absinthe, and thirty-five milligrams in a product labelled as a "bitter."

As recently as 2000, a group of researchers at Berkeley and at Northwestern University announced, in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, that they had identified the precise neurological basis of thujone's mind-altering effect—namely, that it blocked the brain's receptors for gamma-aminobutyric acid, a natural inhibitor of nerve impulses, and thus caused neurons to fire too easily, with an excitatory effect that could lead to seizures. The researchers had made their observations from studying laboratory mice and fruit flies that had been fed alpha-thujone. However, the study took for granted the thujone content in absinthe. The same year, Breaux, using gas chromatography, tested some pre-ban absinthe and found that it contained practically no thujone. He was astonished. "Everything I had learned had suddenly just fallen down," he recalls. He ran the tests again and came up with the same numbers. Then he ran similar tests on the absinthe that he had distilled himself; it, too, contained practically no thujone. Evidently, whatever thujone was present in the macerate did not make the journey out of the alembic, up the swan's neck, and down into the final distillate. "If you make absinthe the way you're supposed to, it's not even there," Breaux said. To his delight, his absinthe was legal according to the revised French law. Five years after this discovery, the results have been independently corroborated by other studies. The thujone, Breaux says, "stays in the pot."

In the Combier distillery, Breaux glanced at the hydrometer chamber and checked the emerging distillate; it was the color of pale straw. He dipped his finger into the stream, tasted, reflected, then diverted the remainder into a second barrel, or, as he called it, the phlegm bucket. (Because of French tax laws, Breaux must account for discrepancies between the amount of alcohol he purchases and the amount that leaves the distillery in bottles.) Then he transferred the still warm distillate into a large copper vat, for coloration—the final, and most fraught, stage of the process. Absinthe's distinctive green was always one of its main selling points, but absinthe's critics (many of whom were in the wine industry) singled out its color as emblematic of an unnatural, industrial product. Artificial shortcuts to this green are common, and Breaux, who insists on natural methods, winked and said, "Here's where we add the fluorescent green dye." He then dunked a hessian sack of herbs like an enormous tea bag into the distillate, and stirred it about with an enormous wooden paddle. Tendrils of green leached out from the sack, spreading outward and releasing an aroma of alcohol and chamomile.

Breaux dipped a small champagne flute in the newly colored distillate, into which he then poured a small quantity of water. The absinthe louched in the glass—the water releasing herbal oils that turned the drink's clear, deep green to an opalescent peridot flecked with amber. He held the glass to the light with evident satisfaction. "People just can't believe that color is natural," he said, "But it is."

Leaning his elbows on the rim of the vat, Breaux handed me a glass, and watched as I drank. There was a dark, heady taste of mint offsetting the natural sweetness of anise; there were bold herbal, grassy floral notes, the slightest hint of spice, and a cloudy hint of bitterness, more a mild astringency than anything I remembered from my session sawing wormwood earlier that morning. "That's absinthe," Breaux said. ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

OFFICIAL NEW 7 WONDERS OF THE WORLD BALLOT

BY BRUCE McCALL

More than 19 million voters have so far taken part. . . . Voting will now continue throughout the year.
—*From an ABC News report on a competition being held by the N7W Foundation, of Zurich, Switzerland, to name the New 7 Wonders of the World.*

I/We vote for ________ to be named one of the New 7 Wonders of the World and hereby attest that said site is an Equal Opportunity Wonder.

SITE QUALIFICATIONS

1. My/Our nominee site is (*check all that apply*): bigger___/older___/more congenial to narwhals, bison, and illegal aliens___/nearer to A.T.M.s___than the Colossus of Rhodes or Steve Wynn's new Las Vegas hotel is.

2. My/Our nominee site:

Can be climbed by the nervous and the elderly.___

Looks like it could fall down any minute but needs minimal upkeep.___

Is easily spelled.___

Is in a nation that declares itself neutral in all international disputes.___

3. My/Our nominee site is not in:

Delaware___/Finland___/inland New Brunswick___/Rep. Tom DeLay's congressional district___/Belgium___/the Hindu Kush___.

4. My/Our nominee is in no way connected with:

The Bible.___

Jack Abramoff.___

The Walt Disney Company.___

Berkshire Hathaway, Inc.___

5. I/We can guarantee that my/our nominee for a New Wonder of the World differs from a "Guinness World Records" entry in that it involves no risk of a person exploding.

(Your signature) ______________

6. Which of these sites would you *not* visit if it were made one of the New 7 Wonders of the World?

(a) Haunted Dumpster, Filo, Okla.

(b) World's only landlocked archipelago, Uruguay.

(c) Natural root-beer geyser, Crete.

(d) Macy's White Sale, Paramus.

7. Complete the sentences.

(a) "I enthusiastically _______ the statement that Zurich, Switzerland, is 'the Northern Doorway to the Southern Gateway to the Alps.' "

(b) "Zurich, Switzerland, is the international hub for any and all _______ planning to visit the New 7 Wonders of the World, which certainly should include Zurich, Switzerland."

(c) "Voters who do not ______ Zurich, Switzerland, as one of the New 7 Wonders of the World could catch Asian bird flu, Montenegrin swine flu, or Glaswegian rat flu."

8. The features that I/we would most like a New Wonder of the World to offer include:

(a) Working cuckoo clocks.

(b) Frequent bus service to Basel, Bern, and Geneva.

(c) Nearby winter-sports facilities.

(d) Versatile pocketknives.

9. I/We believe that a New Wonder of the World can entertain, inform, and uplift all mankind only if:

(a) It is rated a Pick in *People* magazine's Picks & Pans section.

(b) It avoids the depiction, suggestion, or use of human sexual organs.

(c) All voters visit Zurich, Switzerland, to receive their free milk-chocolate wristwatches before the entry deadline.

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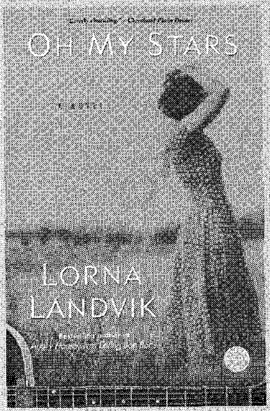

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

HOW AMERICAN IS IT?

The Whitney Museum takes a new direction.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

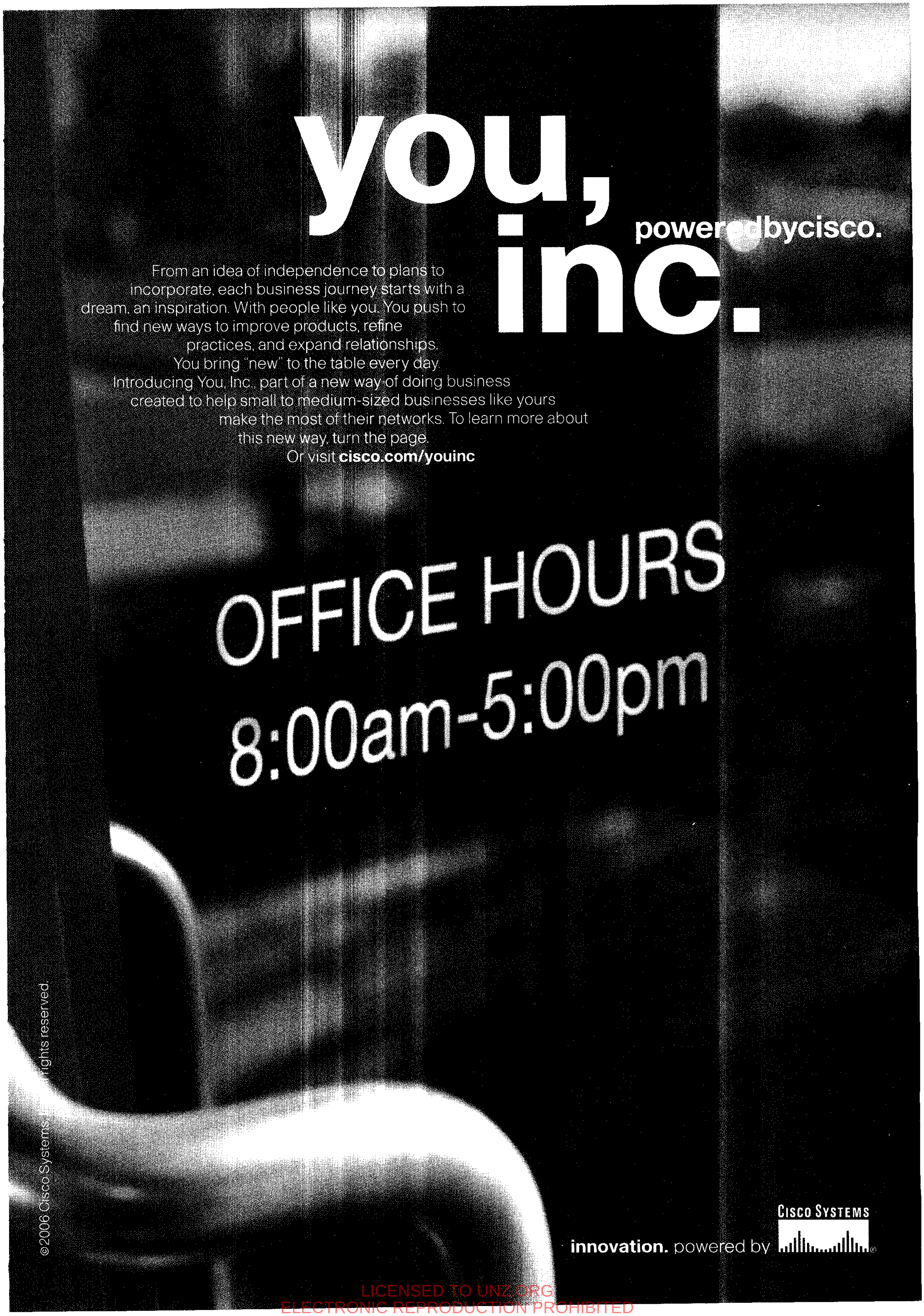
Will the Whitney Museum ever get it right? Having devoted itself for seventy-five years to nurturing and celebrating American art, the museum is now willing—or almost willing—to concede that there is no such thing. Belief in a native American aesthetic has steadily eroded over the past three decades, as art has become increasingly globalized. The Whitney Biennial, that often maligned but indispensable exhibition which serves as the closest thing to a national salon, has broadened its focus in recent years to include non-American citizens who work or live in this country, "in recognition of the increasingly borderless nature of American culture," and the 2006 version, which opened last week, includes a short film by the Italian artist Francesco Vezzoli, who neither lives nor works here. Recently, I asked Adam Weinberg, the third Whitney director since 1991, whether he had any clear sense of what was American in American art. Weinberg, who has a closely cropped brown beard, a resonant voice, and a disarmingly friendly attitude toward the world at large, said, "The more I look, the less I know. I don't think anyone can ever come to a definition of that."

If you assumed that the gradual disappearance of the Whitney's original raison d'être might be somewhat unsettling to its director and his staff, you would be wrong. They look on it as merely the latest challenge in the life of an institution that has been rethinking itself and weathering one identity crisis after another for as long as anyone can recall. More than other museums, the Whitney has been subject to intemperate attacks on its methods, standards, and goals. It has been called dysfunctional, superfluous, reactionary, market-driven, trendy, and unprofessional. I once heard a critic refer to it as "the Canada of museums"—well-meaning but dull. Weinberg believes that New Yorkers have personal feelings about the Whitney, because it has always focussed primarily on living art and artists, and because, he believes, it has tried to be more open and welcoming than other museums—"They feel like it belongs to them." The Metropolitan Museum is a vast encyclopedia, with an aura of infallibility that cradles and awes the viewer. The Museum of Modern Art, founded two years before the Whitney opened, became an international powerhouse whose present ambience seems more corporate than personal. Alone among the city's major art museums, the much smaller, financially shaky Whitney has tried to hold on to the intimate and informal quality of its beginnings, while evolving into something larger and more grownup. There are reasons to think, in the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary year, that this long-delayed and often thwarted evolution may finally be happening.

Adam Weinberg is leading the Whitney's expansion. Photograph by Alec Soth.

MAGNUM

When Weinberg took over, in 2003, the Whitney was in one of its periodic funks. The previous director, Maxwell L. Anderson, had resigned after five years on the job, with a push from several members of the board of trustees whom he seemed to consider his natural enemies. (The Whitney board has had a forty-year history of interfer-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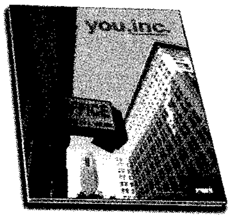

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ing in curatorial affairs.) Anderson's predecessor, David A. Ross, who had put on exhibitions that were heavily criticized as either too avant-garde or too inconsequential, chose to move on, after seven years, to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where he was promised a virtually unlimited acquisition budget to rebuild the collection. Chronically underendowed and seemingly adrift, the Whitney had never really recovered from two traumatic and highly public blunders by the trustees: their inept firing of Thomas N. Armstrong III, the convivial and effective director who had led the museum from 1974 to 1990, and their failure to agree on and push through a long-overdue rebuilding and expansion of the museum's home on Madison Avenue, the inverted ziggurat designed by Marcel Breuer, which opened in 1966.

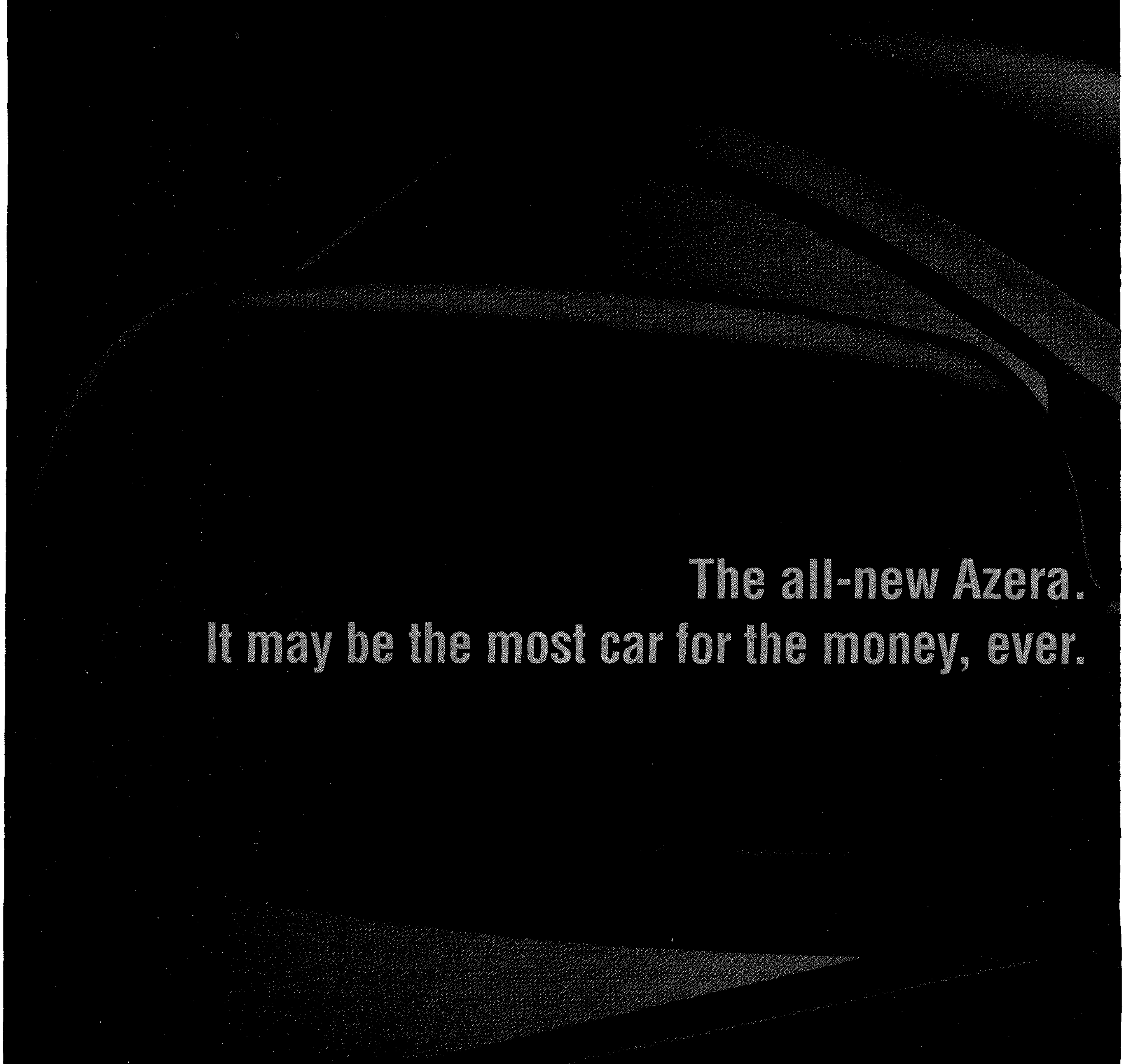
Weinberg has already done quite a lot to resuscitate the patient. In a little more than two years, he has recruited a young and energetic staff of (mostly female) curators, and imbued them with his own unfashionable optimism about the tasks ahead. He has gained the trustees' approval of a major addition to the Breuer building by Renzo Piano, the Italian-born architect of many greatly admired museums in this country and abroad, and shepherded it successfully through the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, whose opposition had helped to kill previous expansion plans. Leonard Lauder, the Whitney's chairman and its most influential trustee, thinks the world of Weinberg. "Adam is a real leader," he told me recently. "He's intensely interested in art, his staff adores him, and he's learned a lot of the things he needs to know to be a great director." Weinberg has even moved to heal what had been a painful breach between the museum and the Whitney family. Three generations of Whitney women had served as presidents and board members, but the trustees' dismissal of Tom Armstrong deeply offended Flora Miller Biddle, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's granddaughter; she eventually left the board, and her daughter, Fiona Donovan, who was also a board member, resigned in 2002. Weinberg has brought them back into the fold. Mrs. Biddle, who says she "could never say no to anything Adam asked me," was the honoree at the annual Whitney Gala last fall. "I haven't felt wounded since Adam came," she told me.

Both inside and outside the museum, there is a tendency to think that the Whitney may in fact have got it right this time. Weinberg was born three blocks from the museum, at Lenox Hill Hospital. Although he grew up in suburban Westchester County, the eldest of three children whose father and uncle were co-owners of a successful hardware business, he remembers spending a lot of time when he was young at the Metropolitan, the Modern, and the Whitney—and also the Jewish Museum, on upper Fifth Avenue, where his father, James Weinberg, served for eight years as chairman of the board. "I've always loved the Whitney," he said last fall. We were sitting in his small, book-crammed office on the museum's fifth floor, drinking green tea and chatting comfortably. Weinberg, who is fifty-one, wore a loose, baggy jacket over an open-collared shirt. Although the demands of his job are constant, he gave the impression of a man who thoroughly enjoys a relaxed conversation.

"I love the collection," he went on. "I love that the Whitney started as a family museum, and that it always had a commitment not just to the artist and to the artistic process but to the idea that artists are human beings whose lives the museum took an interest in. I also like the Whitney's connection to the neighborhood—in a way, it's a neighborhood museum. The connection to the community, to the artist, and to what's going on in art is what makes people feel proprietary about us, and I think that's both the Whitney's greatest weakness and its greatest strength. The criticism we get is part of our birthright." We talked about the "intimate" quality of the Whitney, the lack of distance between the museum and the viewer, and whether he thought that could be preserved in the new building. "That's one of the reasons for hiring Renzo," he said. "His museum buildings are all about intimate relationships with works of art. His spaces are never too grand or too big; there's always a one-to-one relationship." He took me next door to a conference room, where several scale models of the Piano project were set out on tables. The landmarks commission had just issued a ruling on two rather undistinguished brownstone houses on Madison Avenue, adjoining the museum, which Piano had wanted to demolish to make way for the entrance to the new building. The museum owns the brownstones, but, because the site is part of the Upper East Side Historic District, permission to remove them had to come from the commission, which had voted a compromise: the Whitney could take down one brownstone, but not the other. Piano was rethinking the entrance, but all the other important elements of his design had been approved by the commission.

Piano, sensitive to the existing urban context and to the Whitney's penchant for risk-taking, had conceived what he calls a "meteor," a slender hundred-and-seventy-six-foot tower dropped "as though from outer space" into the area behind the brownstones; it will connect to the Breuer building by way of transparent glass bridges. "Because the tower has to be relatively narrow, the floors in it will be smaller than our present second floor, which is the smallest," Weinberg explained. "These will be human-scale galleries, not galleries on steroids. But we'll be adding about seventy per cent more gallery space, plus a theatre, and some classrooms for the education program, none of which we've ever had." The series of architectural designs that the Whitney had previously commissioned, first from Michael Graves and more recently from Rem Koolhaas, had come to grief in large part because of what was perceived as their lack of respect for the Breuer museum, a brutalist icon that many people used to hate but have come to love. Piano was leaving Breuer intact, and giving him a slim and elegant consort. "Renzo's is an Italian building, whereas Breuer's was very German," as Weinberg put it. "I like that, because, together, they make an American building."

Compared with the four-hundred-and-twenty-five-million-dollar construction cost of Yoshio Taniguchi's sleek new monolith for the Museum of Modern Art, the cost of Piano's meteor—which Weinberg estimates at about a hundred and sixty million dollars—sounds frugal. "We'll need to raise an equal amount for endowment,"



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Weinberg said. "The Whitney is one of the most underendowed museums in the country—the endowment is fifty million dollars, for a twenty-four-million-a-year budget." Neither Weinberg nor Lauder is worried by the prospect of raising more than four hundred million dollars over the next few years. The fund drive is not yet under way, but the tentative construction schedule calls for the project to be finished in 2010. Lauder, the chairman of the Estée Lauder cosmetics empire, is the museum's real power center and its principal Maecenas. In 2002, he put together—largely through his own gifts—a dazzling collection of eighty-seven major works by American artists, to fill certain gaps in the museum's permanent collection, and he is expected to spearhead the drive for Piano's addition and for the enhanced endowment. If Weinberg continues to enjoy Lauder's complete confidence—never a certainty, as Anderson discovered—both goals could be within reach.

Take the elevator to the top floor (the fifth) of the Breuer building, where an exhibition of "Highlights from the Permanent Collection" is on permanent view. As the door slides open, the picture most likely to catch your eye is Robert Henri's stylish 1916 portrait of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. Couchant on a high-backed settee, the slender, dark-haired benefactress looks surprisingly contemporary, with her direct gaze, bright-red lipstick, and green silk lounging pajamas. Harry Payne Whitney, her husband, who was almost as rich as she was, wouldn't allow this painting into their Fifth Avenue apartment; he didn't want their friends to see his wife in pants. They had a relatively harmonious and unconstricting marriage. He played polo, travelled, and cultivated other relationships. She made sculptures—very large sculptures of allegorical figures, often male and heroically nude—for display in public places. In her spare time, she founded the Whitney Museum. It grew out of the Whitney Studio Club, which she had started in 1918 as a place to exhibit the young, progressive artists of that era, when almost no one was interested in their work. The cataclysm of modernism that broke over America with the Armory Show, in 1913, had marginalized these artists, and for a while Mrs. Whitney was their most generous patron. She bought their work, but not, so the story goes, their best work; reasoning that they might eventually be able to sell that, she purchased lesser examples. Her largesse extended to paying rent and medical bills for needy artists; she gave some of them monthly stipends, and she financed Stuart Davis's only trip to Paris, in 1928. By 1929, she had acquired some five hundred paintings and sculptures by American artists, which she authorized her friend and assistant Juliana Force to offer as a gift to the Metropolitan Museum, together with a sizable endowment for their care and feeding. Edward Robinson, the Met's director at the time, turned the offer down so briskly that Mrs. Force never mentioned the endowment. The result of his rudeness was the Whitney Museum of American Art, funded entirely by Mrs. Whitney and directed by Mrs. Force. It opened in 1931, in three converted brownstones on West Eighth Street.

The paintings and sculptures on the fifth floor today cover the period from the turn of the century to about 1950. (The Whitney sold its pre-1900 holdings in 1949, and used the proceeds to buy contemporary work—a move that Tom Armstrong always regretted.) Although the works include none of Mrs. Whitney's second-tier purchases, they are by the artists she supported and believed in: John Sloan, Everett Shinn, Thomas Hart Benton, and other Ashcan School realists, and also Marsden Hartley, Charles Sheeler, John Marin, Stuart Davis, Edward Hopper, and Georgia

O'Keeffe. They make a fine showing and, in some respects, an arguably "American" one. Even though the techniques, the methods, and many of the motifs come from Europe, the pictures strike me as more direct and less knowing—less insistently radical, certainly—than what you find in the early-to-mid-twentieth-century galleries of mostly European art at MOMA.

Adam Weinberg, who joined me on the fifth floor, pointed out that the notion of a homegrown American art was just emerging in the early years of the century. "Only a handful of galleries showed it, and serious American artists still had to be trained abroad," he said. "I was talking about this at lunch today with Donna De Salvo, my associate director. She said that Mrs. Whitney succeeded so well in making American art accepted that this part of her mission had been fulfilled. We also decided that at some point in the nineteen-seventies the idea of seeing American art in isolation became invalid. I think artists just began to see themselves as part of a larger international situation. But there was a noticeable shift, when people stopped painting the American scene."

The "Highlights" installation cuts off just before the mid-century breakthroughs of Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and others of the New York School, the first American artists to exert a wide influence on artists in other countries. The Whitney was fatally slow to recognize their importance. During the mid- to late nineteen-forties, most of the New York School artists showed in the Whitney exhibits and in Biennials, from which the museum traditionally buys a number of works for its permanent collection; but the Whitney had a deep-seated loyalty to realist art, and, for a decade or more, that kept it from buying Pollock and his peers, or the Pop and minimalist artists who followed them. Since 1974, when Armstrong began to accelerate the transition from what had been a family fief into a professional, publicly funded institution, the museum has struggled to remedy this oversight. Armstrong, with virtually no acquisition funds at his disposal, brought in Frank Stella's early black painting "Die Fahne Hoch!" by persuading fifteen people to put up five thousand dollars apiece. In 1981, he startled the art world by raising and spending a million dollars for Jasper Johns's "Three Flags"; at the time, this was the highest price ever paid for a work by a living artist. (Arthur Altschul, one of the Whitney's more active trustees, resigned soon afterward, reportedly in protest over the purchase.) Armstrong did what he could, but the Whitney has had trouble catching up with postwar art. "There's no question we didn't do as well as we should have on acquisitions," Weinberg told me. "For years, we had only one Pollock and one painting by Barnett Newman. Eventually, we did get a number of Rothkos, I'm happy to say, and seven major de Koonings, including 'Door to the River' and 'Woman and Bicycle.'" Lauder's 2002 gift added one more Pollock and a lot more Johnses, and filled in several other gaping holes in the collection. But the Museum of Modern Art probably has stronger holdings in American postwar art than the Whitney does—I say "probably" because we so rarely get to see what the Whitney owns, and there is no published catalogue of the collection. The postwar part of it has never been installed on a permanent basis; although the museum currently mounts temporary shows from the collection on the second floor, the third and fourth floors are reserved for special exhibitions. This is the main argument for an expansion. In the new Whitney, sixty thousand square feet of gallery space will be reserved for the permanent collection—about as much as the Breuer building has on all five floors.

This raises a thorny question: Does the collection deserve so much space? Only a fraction of the museum's approximately fifteen thousand objects (paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and other works) are currently on view. I spent an hour with Weinberg in the Whitney's storage warehouse downtown, viewing a random sample of pictures pulled out on their sliding racks. Some were sensational—de Kooning's "Woman in Landscape III," Franz Kline's "Mahoning"—but there was a sense of endless dross as well: dozens of dim works by forgotten artists, bought from Biennials in the years when Raphael and Moses Soyer were considered important painters. This summer, all five floors of the Breuer building are being turned over to an exhibition of works from the Whitney's collection, from 1900 to the present. Donna De Salvo, who heads the team of curators organizing the show, tells me that it will focus on "certain moments that are represented in great depth in this collection, such as the early twentieth-century"—she called Hopper "the great paradigm"—"and also moments that have had an impact internationally," including minimalism and pop art. The show, at any rate, should give us a clearer idea about where the Whitney, in its latest incarnation, is headed.

Now that the Biennial shows non-American artists, I asked Weinberg, would the permanent collection do the same? "I don't see us collecting work by a non-American artist who is not working in the United States, for a period of time or permanently," he said. "But there will be more non-American artists in Whitney exhibitions. What is the dynamic between American artists and the rest of the world? This is what we're exploring." Next September, the Whitney will present a major exhibition called "Picasso and American Art." Organized by a guest curator, Michael Fitzgerald, who is a leading Picasso expert, this one will assess the impact of Picasso's work on nine American artists and, to make its points, will include a significant sampling of Picassos.

If there's a contradiction here, it's an American one: the Whitney, like the rest of us, wants it both ways.

The Whitney Biennial is the museum's defining exhibition, the one that takes more risks, goes out on more limbs, and rolls with more punches. This year's Biennial is no exception. Pushing the international connection, Weinberg chose two foreign-born curators to organize it: Chrissie Iles, the Whitney's curator specializing in contemporary art, is British; Philippe Vergne, the chief curator and deputy director at the Walker Art Center, in Minneapolis, is French. Their yearlong travels covered much of this country and extended to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Berlin, Paris, and several other artist habitats; quite a few of the artists they selected live outside the United States. "We do want to respect the Whitney's mission," Vergne told me, "but we conceived the mission as 'America in the world.' " Iles and Vergne have broken precedent by giving this show a title, "Day for Night"; it refers to the 1973 Truffaut film, which itself referred to the cinematographer's technique of shooting night scenes in daylight, through a special filter. Iles describes the tenor of much current art as dark and neo-Romantic. "There's quite an apocalyptic mood at the moment," as she expressed it. "There's a lot of anger about the war in Iraq. I think in the last Biennial there was a sense of escapism, introspection, and grief. This time, it's very different."

The Biennial, like the Whitney, keeps getting reinvented. From 1932 to 1940, each invited artist decided what works to show; since then, the curators in charge have made that decision. The exhibitions became Annuals in 1937 (painting one year, sculpture the next), then, in 1973, reverted to Biennials. Some have aimed at catholicity, and included artists of all ages and from as many different parts of the country as possible; others have sought to identify trends or make art-historical judgments, which usually meant focussing mainly on artists who showed in New York galleries. Video works were included for the first time in 1975, films in 1979; photographs became a significant factor in 1977, and performance works in 1979. Tom Armstrong, accused of being in thrall to New York art dealers, formed a regional advisory committee to make Biennial suggestions. David Ross put a single curator in charge of the selection process. Max Anderson cobbled together a Biennial committee of outside experts. The one unchanging aspect of a Whitney Biennial—the one thing everyone can count on—is that Hilton Kramer, the most easily outraged of American art critics, will hate it. His *Times* review of the 1977 Biennial called it "a disaster, a libel and a misrepresentation of the art they are responsible for showing us," and went on to warn readers that the Whitney, under Armstrong, "looks more and more like an institution against which the interests of art must be energetically defended." Kramer's implacable defense of those interests has not flagged in the years since he left the *Times* for the New York *Observer*. In 2000, after reminding us that there had never been a really good Biennial, he pronounced that year's version "the first in which there is not to be found a single object, installation or home video worth seeing." Such constancy is reassuring, and Iles and Vergne look forward to this year's fatwa.

NEXT

The message of even those raised from seed,
their small hands blastomeres, overloved
for what they are, over-looked-at. Watch me go.
We were digging the bed when a woman
appeared at the gate, her face torqued red,
crying openmouthed and silently. Do you know
Angela, she said. Angela is dead.
Later, we heard about her gold teeth out,
a cup of golden liquid underneath her bed.

I learned: nasturtium comes from "twisted nose."
Then found two deep ruts
around the roots, the strangled faces
touched but silent, saying someone has been here.
And inside our spotless house three white worms
curling in an ecstasy of everything they know.

—*Dana Goodyear*

Some people think that the Biennial has outlived its usefulness, and should be restructured, or maybe even discontinued. More than two hundred biennial-type exhibitions take place around the world now. The Whitney's is the only one that focusses on American art, to be sure, but, if American art can't really be defined anymore, what's the point? Weinberg disagrees with this line of thought. "I never curated a Biennial," he said, "but, to me, and I think to the public, the Biennial is really the touchstone of this institution. It's also a galvanizing force for the museum, a call to arms, so to speak. And it still means a huge amount to artists. Both older and younger artists are delighted to be in a Whitney Biennial. It has a great history, and I don't see any reason to give that up."

One of the few criticisms I've heard about Adam Weinberg is that he might be too nice to run a museum. Several Whitney curators have told me that this is not a problem, that he knows how to make tough decisions and stand behind them. He made one a few weeks after becoming director, when he fired Marla Prather, the Whitney's curator of postwar art. Prather had been on an extended personal leave, and Weinberg took a beating in the press for what seemed like a callous act; since Prather has signed a gag order not to discuss this, and Weinberg is equally reticent, the circumstances remain unclear. He has built a strong curatorial staff, hiring back Elizabeth Sussman (who had left when Anderson took over) and bringing in Donna De Salvo from the Tate Modern, where she had been Sir Nicholas Serota's highly valued senior curator.

While acknowledging that Weinberg is not a pushover, most people seem to agree that he has always been a notoriously good guy. He was a good son, doing well (but not too well) at school. He majored in art history at Brandeis University, and was an eager summer intern at the Guggenheim Museum in 1973, his first museum experience. "It had never occurred to me before that people had jobs working in museums," he said. "Growing up in a Jewish family, you think of becoming a doctor or a lawyer or a businessperson. But my mother was a pianist and a choral singer, and went back to school to get her master's in music education, and my father was on the board of the Jewish Museum, so culture was a big part of our life."

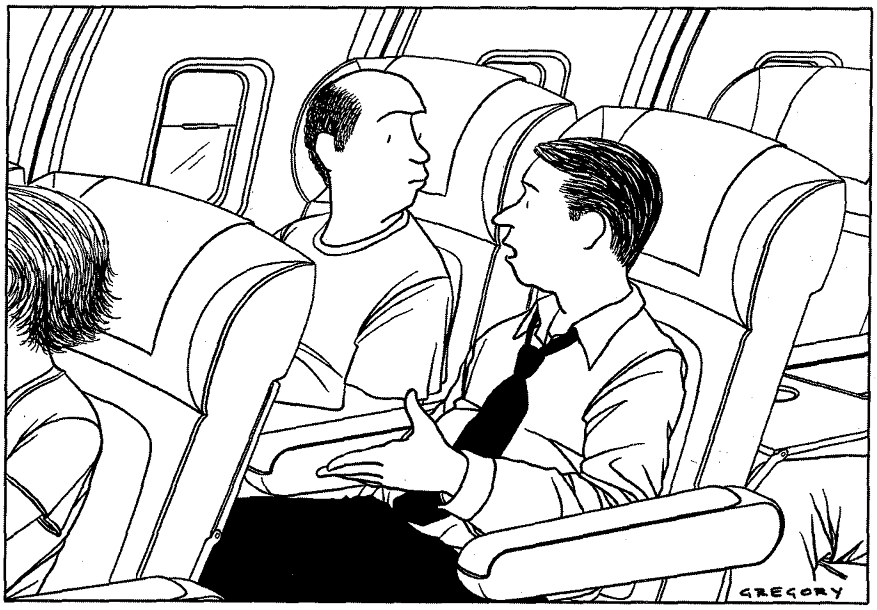
After graduating from Brandeis, in 1977, he won a National Endowment for the Arts grant to work at the Toledo Museum of Art, which had an excellent museum training program, and in 1981 got his first museum job, at the Walker Art Center. Weinberg learned a lot from Martin Friedman, the Walker's innovative and demanding director. "Watching Martin install works of art was an incredible experience," he said. "He is a curator as much as a director, probably the last of a generation of American museum directors to curate shows on a regular basis—this still exists in Europe, but even there it's disappearing. He taught me about the endless possibilities of ways to display works of art. Martin is also a real impresario. There's a little bit of P. T. Barnum in every great museum director, and he understands that." Friedman's influence is evident today in Weinberg's ambition to be a curator-director, and in his close relationships with artists. "Adam starts with the artist and works outward," Chrissie Iles told me.

Five years after Weinberg joined the Walker's staff, Martin Friedman's wife, Mildred, who ran the museum's design department, hired a talented young designer named Lorraine Ferguson to work on the museum's publications. Both Friedmans soon noticed that Weinberg was paying frequent visits to Lorraine's office. Ferguson had been married before, and when Weinberg proposed to her, her first reaction was "Don't even think about it." He persisted, and they got married a year later, in 1987. Weinberg had been at the Walker for six years by then, and he was ready to move on. He and Ferguson both started looking for other jobs. Ferguson found one first, teaching graphic design at Yale; a few months later, Tom Armstrong hired Weinberg to direct the Whitney's branch museum at the Equitable Center—one of three offshoots that Armstrong had established, with the financial support of corporate chieftains who thought a little high culture on the premises might burnish their image. (The chieftains eventually realized that they could do this themselves, without the Whitney; only the Altria branch, on Park Avenue at Forty-second Street, now exists.) In 1990, Martin Friedman recommended Adam for a curatorial job at the American Center in Paris, and the Weinbergs moved to France.

The board of trustees of the American Center, a lively, popular, privately financed venue for concerts, lectures, exhibitions, and other forms of cultural exchange, had recently sold their building, on the Boulevard Raspail, and commissioned Frank Gehry to design a tonier headquarters in Bercy, across the Seine from the new Bibliothèque Nationale. Unfortunately, most of the money from the Boulevard Raspail sale went into the Gehry building, and it soon became apparent that funds for the programs there were not being raised. Sensing catastrophe, Weinberg resigned, in 1992. (The American Center closed in 1996. Gehry's exhilarating building was sold to the French government, which, after letting it stand vacant for eleven years, remodelled it recently as a film institute and library.) When Weinberg resigned, he had no idea what he was going to do next, but Martin Friedman had heard that David Ross, the Whitney's new director, was considering Weinberg for the permanent-collection curator position. Friedman called Ross to support Weinberg's candidacy, Ross called Weinberg in Paris, and the Weinberg family—which now included one-year-old Zoe, born in Paris—headed back to New York.

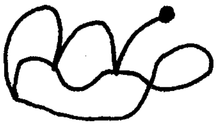
Weinberg's second act at the Whitney lasted from 1992 to 1999. He organized a number of well-received exhibitions, including a transatlantic series called "Views from Abroad," in which Serota and two other European museum directors were asked to curate shows from the Whitney's permanent collection—the idea being to "give us a fresh look at American art." He also endeared himself to a staff whose nerves were occasionally frazzled by the chaotic, high-energy enthusiasms of David Ross. "Adam has a certain lack of ego that makes it possible for him to be a force," according to Thelma Golden, who was the Whitney's first African-American curator. (She is now the director of the Studio Museum in Harlem.) "He listens, he hears, and he's willing to step out on a limb and make things happen."

When Ross decamped for San Francisco, in 1998, and Anderson was brought in to replace him, a difficult transition ensued. Anderson's decision to assign specific curatorial areas (he called them "portfolios") to some curators roiled professional egos on a staff that was used to a looser and more collegial sharing of responsibility. Two curators resigned, and soon after that Weinberg, who had been the in-house favorite for the director's job, accepted an offer to become the director of the Addison Gallery of American Art, in Andover, Massachusetts. Founded in 1931, the same year as the Whitney, the Addison is one of the country's best small museums. Adam liked the fact that it was a teaching museum, with a



"It's been nice talking to you, but I should probably get back to staring blankly ahead."

strong connection to Phillips Academy, and Lorraine, who by then was working as an independent book designer, looked forward to raising their two daughters (they were in the process of adopting a Chinese baby, whom they named Kira, in 1999) in one of New England's prettiest towns. They bought an eighteenth-century house, with a screened-in back porch and a garden, and settled into what struck their many friends as the perfect life. But when the Whitney offered Weinberg its top job, in the spring of 2003, after Anderson had resigned, the prospect was irresistible. It was, he said, "the job I've always wanted."



Last fall, my wife and I had dinner at the Weinbergs' town house, on East Eighty-ninth street, between York and East End Avenues. They had only recently moved in, after a one-year renovation. Lorraine was away—she had volunteered to accompany Adam's seventy-five-year-old uncle to Paris, which he yearned to see once more—but the two girls were there. Zoe, quietly self-possessed at fourteen, was helping her father cook dinner. Six-year-old Kira was bouncing around on all fours, in a leopard-spot Halloween costume that her mother had finished sewing in a taxi going to the airport. The other dinner guests—Renzo Piano, his wife, Milly, and their son Giorgio, who is a little younger than Kira—arrived at the same time we did, and Weinberg came out to the sidewalk to welcome us all.

Piano is Weinberg's equal in the charm sweepstakes. That evening, he was full of enthusiasm for the Princeton philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt's little book "On Bullshit," which he had just read in an Italian translation. "It turns out that most of what goes on these days is bullshit," he announced. "Berlusconi"—Italy's Prime Minister—"is total bullshit. And architects who do sculpture—bullshit." After he had done more riffs on this theme, I asked him how disappointed he was at not being able to tear down one of the two brownstones adjoining the Whitney. "I understand that attitude," he replied pensively, stroking his salt-and-pepper beard. "I found it disturbing, but I am a reasonable person. So now the entrance will be more—more Italian, through the remaining brownstone. And you know what? It will be better. I've learned something in my life, about making negative into positive. You just go deeper."

The evening passed in the Weinbergs' downstairs sitting room and open kitchen, with much laughter and some grilled swordfish, followed by Giorgio's first marshmallows, which the kids toasted on a barbecue in the back yard. Afterward, walking home, I found myself thinking how Piano's talk about bullshit and about "going deeper" could be applied to the Whitney's long-running identity crisis. "So much of this job as a museum director is just silliness," Tom Armstrong had said to me, in a conversation we'd had a few weeks earlier. "When you consider that you put your life experience into courting someone to give you something, and your secretary gets her first name wrong in the next letter, and that ruins the relationship—this actually happened!" One of the precipitating factors in Armstrong's downfall at the Whitney was that a trustee accused him of anti-Semitism. The trustee's son had tried to buy an apartment in the Armstrongs' building, the board had turned him down, and the infuriated trustee, citing anti-Semitism as the reason, had blamed Armstrong, who was on the co-op's board but had recused himself from voting. It was an absurd charge. "Tom hired me," Weinberg said, "and I never felt any kind of anti-Semitic thing from him. Half to two-thirds of his board were Jews."

At the deeper level (which does not always exclude bullshit), a lot of thought is being brought to bear, once again, on the Whitney's mission in life—and not just by Weinberg and his colleagues. A friend of mine, an art dealer who is in close touch with many artists, collectors, and museum people here and abroad, said the other day that he felt the Whitney could become the preëminent New York museum for contemporary art. Although Weinberg would never use those words, he clearly agrees. "I believe that we are basically framing the discussion about what's going on in contemporary art here," he told me. "And we're doing it in a way that most museums are not willing or able to do." In the past six months, the Whitney has mounted several exhibitions that illustrate his point: for instance, a Richard Tuttle retrospective, which makes a better case for this quirky and unclassifiable artist than the original version of it, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, managed to do; and the curator Barbara Haskell's masterly retrospective of Oscar Bluemner, a virtually forgotten, German-born colorist who showed at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and who looks amazingly fresh today. Neither of these exhibitions drew large crowds. The Whitney attracts about half a million visitors a year, as opposed to MOMA's two and a half million in 2005. Even the Met, whose attendance last year was four and a half million, is courting contemporary artists these days, doing shows of Robert Rauschenberg and Kara Walker, among others, and it is no secret that its motives include bringing in even larger crowds. Weinberg thinks that the Whitney can steer a different course, in part by reaffirming its own traditions: close contact with living artists, and an intimate connection between the museum and the visitor—neither of which requires huge attendance figures.

"The Whitney's mission is to evolve," Weinberg said. "We have to be able to present the permanent collection in a broad way, in order to do justice to the historical aspect of our mission. I like to say we are a museum of the present, drawn by the past. But in my mind the emphasis should be on living artists, as it has been from the very beginning. The trick is to present older works in ways that connect them to the present. We're always going to be criticized for being trendy, for getting things before they're fully tested. You can't afford not to do that, if you're the Whitney. We have to take risks, and make mistakes, and be light on our feet. Sometimes the things that happen by chance are the best things. The art world is changing, artists are changing, so to have a plan that's too fixed would defeat what we're trying to do. The metaphor always comes back to the artist's work, and that's why I feel we're doing the right thing. In the end, you have to trust the process." ♦

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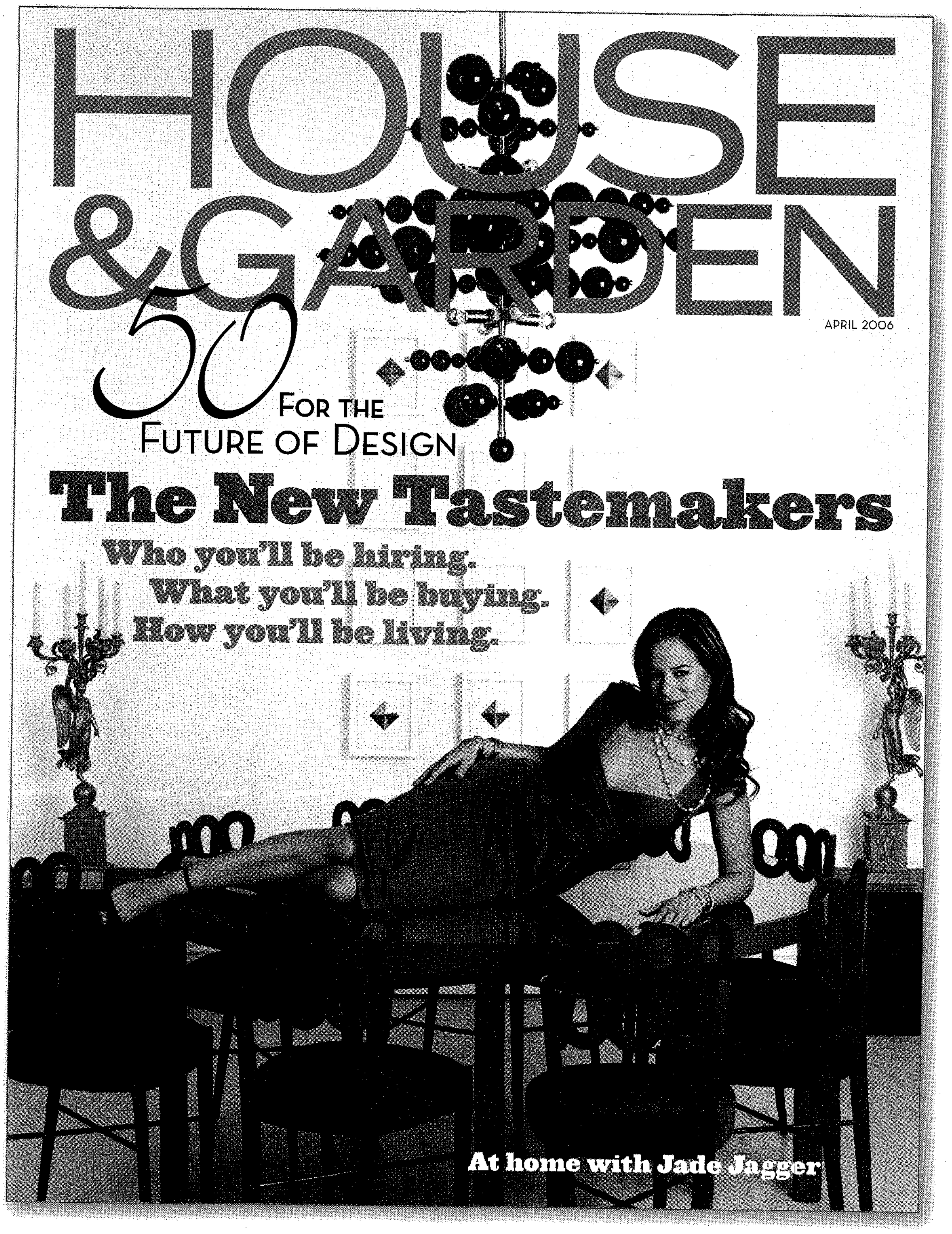
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The Bush Administration's war on the laboratory.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

On December 1st, Merck & Company applied to the Food and Drug Administration for a license to sell a vaccine that it has developed to protect women against the human papillomavirus. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States; more than half of all Americans become infected at some point in their lives. The virus is also the primary cause of cervical cancer, which kills nearly five thousand American women every year and hundreds of thousands more in the developing world. There are at least a hundred strains of HPV, but just two are responsible for most of the cancer. Two others cause genital warts, which afflict millions of people. Merck's vaccine, designed to protect against those four strains, has been tested in thirteen countries, including the United States. More than twelve thousand women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six were monitored for an average of two years. The results were conclusive: twenty-one of the women who received a placebo during the trial developed the cellular abnormalities that are associated with cancer and other illnesses. Not one of those in the vaccinated group did. Another vaccine, which is being developed by GlaxoSmithKline, promises to be just as effective.

Even in the age of molecular medicine, such unqualified successes are rare. "This is a cancer vaccine, and an immensely effective one," the Nobel laureate David Baltimore, who has served for the past eight years as president of the California Institute of Technology, told me. "We should be proud and excited. It has the potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives every year."

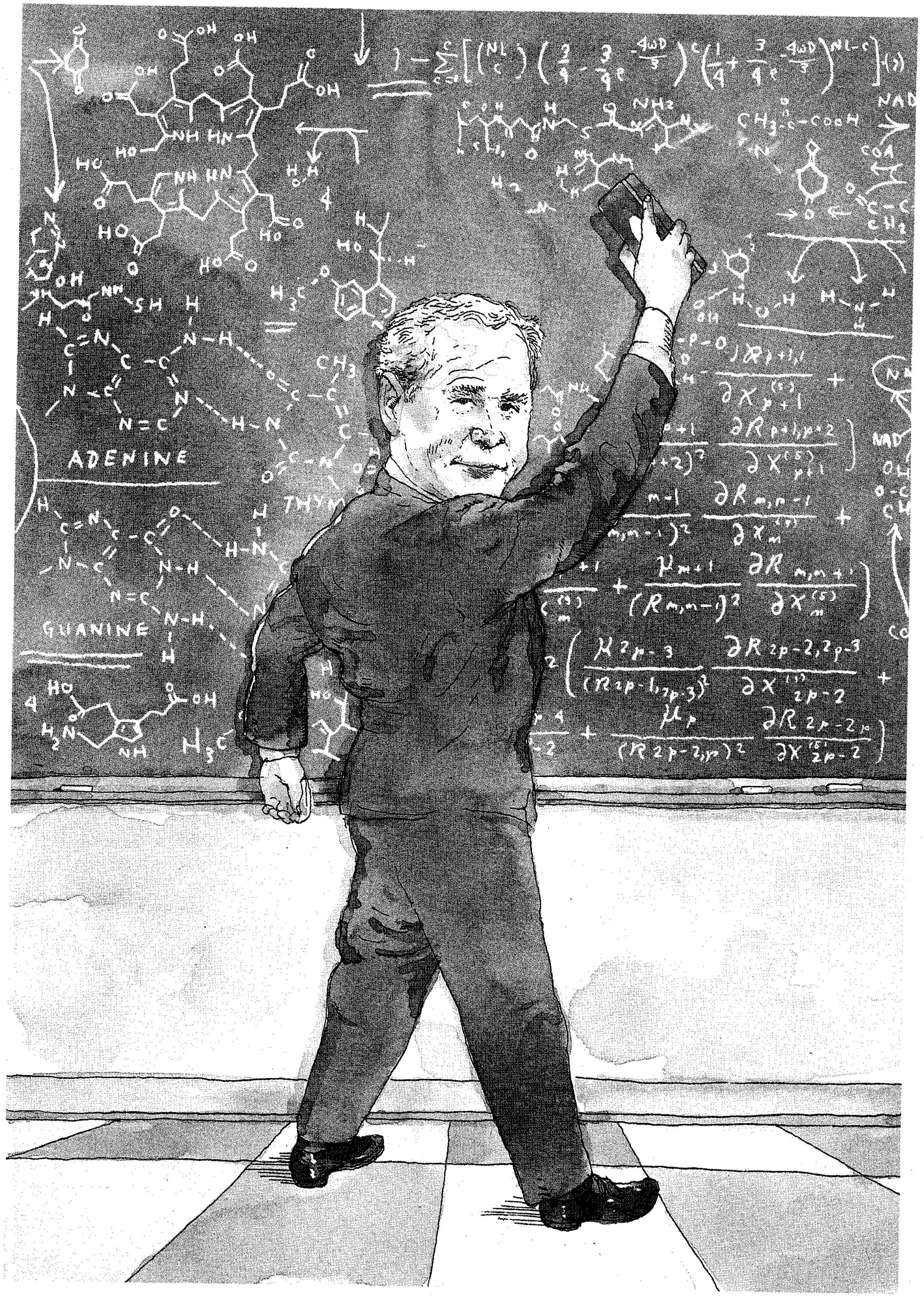
The vaccine is now under review by the F.D.A. and could be approved for use in the United States by June; what happens after that will depend largely on the Bush Administration's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The committee's recommendations are not binding, but most states rely on them in determining which vaccines a child must receive in order to attend public school. To prevent infection with HPV, and to minimize the risk of cervical cancer, girls would need inoculations before becoming sexually active. The average age of first intercourse in America is under seventeen; to insure the broadest possible coverage, the vaccines would have to be administered much earlier.

Vaccinations for contagious diseases like measles and mumps are required before a child can enter public school. That won't be the case with the HPV vaccine, however. The Bush Administration, its allies on Capitol Hill, and the religious base of the Republican Party are opposed to mandatory HPV vaccinations. They prefer to rely on education programs that promote abstinence from sexual activity, and see the HPV vaccine as a threat to that policy. For years, conservatives have regarded the human papillomavirus as a kind of index of promiscuity. Many abstinence supporters argue that eliminating the threat of infection would only encourage teenagers to have sex. "I personally object to vaccinating children when they don't need vaccinations, particularly against a disease that is one hundred per cent preventable with proper sexual behavior," Leslee J. Unruh, the founder and president of the Abstinence Clearinghouse, said. "Premarital sex is dangerous, even deadly. Let's not encourage it by vaccinating ten-year-olds so they think they're safe." Senator Tom Coburn, Republican of Oklahoma, a family physician and a prominent leader among those who believe that abortion should be illegal, has argued repeatedly in Congress that since condoms can fail, the nation should stop relying on them so heavily. In 2004, he made his position clear when he testified about his experience treating patients who have been infected with HPV: "Studies have indicated for years that promiscuity was associated with cervical cancer."

Bush Administration health officials decline to discuss the vaccine while it is under consideration by the F.D.A. "I can't talk about that," Andrew Von Eschenbach said when I visited him at the National Cancer Institute, which he runs. "I would love to. But it just would not be appropriate." I had asked to speak to Von Eschenbach in his capacity as the acting commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, a post that he has held since last fall, when his predecessor resigned suddenly. Von Eschenbach, a urological oncologist, is a friend of President Bush's from Texas, and spent twenty-five years at the University of Texas's M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. He is the first person in American history to oversee both an enormous federal bureaucracy that is responsible for discovering drugs and another, even larger agency that must approve those drugs.

Despite the official silence, the Bush Administration has been relentless in its opposition to any drug, vaccine, or initiative that could be interpreted as lessening the risks associated with premarital sex. It has made every effort to diminish the use of condoms as a method of birth control in the United States and throughout the world. Government policy requires that one-third of H.I.V.-prevention spending go to "abstinence until marriage" programs. Since George W. Bush became President, the United States has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on abstinence programs, and it has cut almost that much in aid to groups that support abortion and the use of condoms as a primary method of birth control. (Family-planning organizations in the developing world are denied U.S. grants if they so much as discuss abortion with their clients.) The Administration's op-

BARRY BLITT



ADENINE
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position runs so deep that at one point federal health officials replaced pages from a National Cancer Institute Web site with information that suggested, without evidence, that there might be a correlation between abortion and breast cancer.

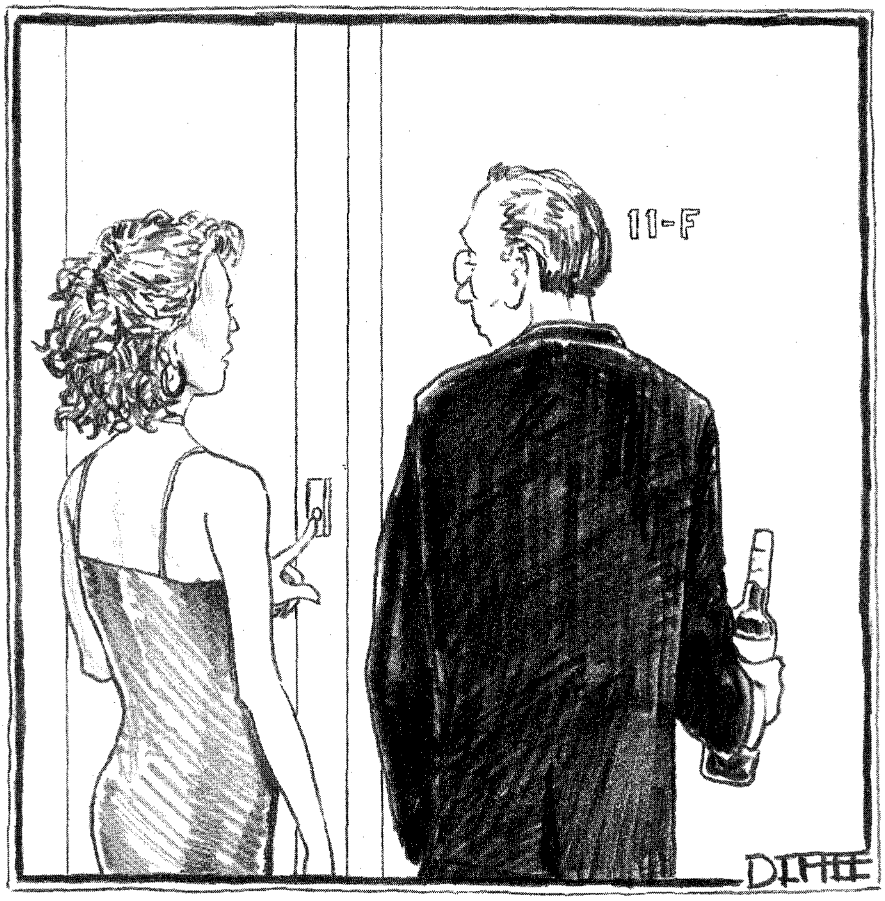
Several years ago, the Centers for Disease Control removed a fact sheet about condoms from its Web site; the sheet disappeared for more than a year, and, when it was replaced, instructions on how to use condoms had been supplanted by a message denigrating them. The C.D.C. also removed a summary of studies that showed there was no increase in sexual activity among teenagers who had been taught about condoms. "They were the most horrific examples of manipulating science I have ever seen," a former senior official at the C.D.C. told me. "Abstinence is the only thing that matters to this crowd. They have even brought people to Washington from Atlanta"—where the C.D.C. is based—"just to lecture about the value of teaching abstinence. There were no scientific presentations, just speeches." He asked not to be identified because he is dependent upon receiving government funds in his current job.

Nearly every group across the political spectrum supports abstinence as a first line of defense against sexually transmitted diseases as well as against unwanted pregnancies. But abstinence programs often fail. In one recent study, researchers at Columbia and Yale found that though virginity "pledge" programs helped many participants to delay sex, eighty-eight per cent of those who took such pledges and had sex before the end of the study did so before marriage. When it came to preventing sexually transmitted diseases, students in the programs fared no better than those in the control group. The study also found that students who promised to remain virgins were less likely to use contraception when they did have sex, and they were less likely to seek S.T.D. testing.

Two years ago, in one of the most contentious decisions in the history of the F.D.A., the agency rejected an application by Barr Pharmaceuticals to make the emergency contraceptive Plan B—commonly referred to as the morning-after pill—available over the counter, after the members of its scientific advisory committee voted, twenty-three to four, in favor of permitting the switch. Agency officials said that they did not have enough information about how easier availability of the drug would affect adolescent girls. Last year, the F.D.A. again refused to approve the application, even after the company altered its proposal to address those concerns. The agency had never rejected a similar request against the advice of its scientific advisers and its own staff. "This just came from nowhere, and it was clearly not a decision that was made on behalf of women or families," Susan F. Wood told me. Wood, who was the director of the agency's Office of Women's Health at the time, quit in protest. "I felt there was no role—not just for me but for the people who have expertise. I lose a lot of battles; normally you go out and work to fight another day. But this time I just couldn't look in the mirror and live with myself." She was not the only scientist who felt that way: Frank Davidoff, the editor emeritus of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, resigned as a consultant to one of the committees that voted to approve over-the-counter use of Plan B, saying that the agency had decided to place the pursuit of its moral agenda above the facts.

Religious conservatives are unapologetic; not only do they believe that mass use of an HPV vaccine or the availability of emergency contraception will encourage adolescents to engage in unacceptable sexual behavior; some have even stated that they would feel similarly about an H.I.V. vaccine, if one became available. "We would have to look at that closely," Reginald Finger, an evangelical Christian and a former medical adviser to the conservative political organization Focus on the Family, said. "With any vaccine for H.I.V., disinhibition"—a medical term for the absence of fear—"would certainly be a factor, and it is something we will have to pay attention to with a great deal of care." Finger sits on the Centers for Disease Control's Immunization Committee, which makes those recommendations.

"I never thought that now, in the twenty-first century, we could have a debate about what to do with a vaccine that



"Just don't be yourself."

prevents cancer," David Baltimore said when we met in his office. Baltimore, a short, intense man, has spent much of his life studying the relationship between viruses and cancer. He stood up from the couch and crossed the room to his desk. "Politics plays a role in all these decisions, and so does belief," he said. "I have no problems with that. But this is religious zealotry masked as politics, and it runs against everything that I as a scientist believe in, that I have devoted my life to. We are talking about basic public health now. What moral precepts allow us to think that the risk of death is a price worth paying to encourage abstinence as the only approach to sex?"

Since the Enlightenment, scientific enterprise has been defined by an ethic of independent inquiry and by reliance on data that can be observed, tested, analyzed, and repeated. The scientific method has come to shape our notion of progress and of modern life. Science largely dictated the political realities of the twentieth century. As Harold Varmus, the Nobel Prize-winning former director of the National Institutes of Health, pointed out in a recent speech, science won the Second World War—not just with the atomic bomb but with radar, quinine, and the spectacular advances in health brought about by the use of penicillin and other antibiotics. In 1944, the engineer and entrepreneur Vannevar Bush, who oversaw military research during the war, was described on the cover of *Time* as "The General of Physics." The next year, as the war neared its end, he began to argue that if the United States was to retain its economic stability and military primacy the government would need to finance the basic research carried out at American universities.

The country has spent billions of dollars on research since then, and the investment has paid off. The U.S. became the most advanced nation in virtually every field of scientific endeavor, and today most researchers receive some form of federal funds—and are therefore subject to the government's political will. (Public funding reflects political realities. For 2006, President Bush proposed an increase in spending on scientific research, but ninety-seven per cent of the increase will apply to two areas: weapons development and space-exploration vehicles. This year, for the first time in thirty-six years, the budget for the National Institutes of Health, which doubled between 1998 and 2003, will be cut.)

In the past, political leaders and scientists of prominence didn't care who voted for whom: either you were good enough to do the job or you were not. (Unless, like the nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer, you were suspected of supporting Communists.) Vannevar Bush was a conservative who opposed the New Deal, and not quietly. Yet President Roosevelt didn't hesitate to appoint him, or to take his advice. In 1959, after Dwight Eisenhower created the position of science adviser, in the wake of Sputnik, the Harvard chemist George B. Kistiakowsky assumed the post. Jerome Wiesner, a Democrat who subsequently became president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, sat on the Science Advisory Committee—which met each month with Kistiakowsky and often with the President. When John F. Kennedy took office, Kistiakowsky and Wiesner simply switched roles. "In bringing scientists into the high councils of government, the presidential indifference to their politics and party affiliations reflected the belief that science and scientists were above politics," Daniel S. Greenberg wrote in "Science, Money, and Politics" (2001), his invaluable exploration of the relationship between those three elements of America's postwar success. "Scientists might consider themselves Republicans or Democrats, but, as politicians saw it, science was their true party affiliation—and scientists saw it that way, too."

During the early years of the Cold War, the country's scientific goals—winning the space race against the Russians, for instance, and eliminating deaths caused by infectious diseases like polio—were clear, so science and politics never seemed to clash. That began to change in 1964, when Barry Goldwater ran for President against Lyndon Johnson. Nearly a hundred thousand researchers, appalled by Goldwater's declared willingness to deploy nuclear weapons on the battlefield, formed a group called Scientists and Engineers for Johnson. Scientists grew more demonstrably political throughout the Vietnam War, and by 1973 Richard Nixon, outraged by academic opposition to the antiballistic-missile system and other Administration programs, abolished the position of White House science adviser. (The job was reinstated by Gerald Ford, who also created the Office of Science and Technology Policy to advise the White House on scientific issues.)

If the nuclear age was difficult to understand or to accept, the molecular age has been even more so. As our knowledge about the genetic underpinnings of human life has deepened, the controversy surrounding much of the research has increased. The more we know about how human life develops, the more we seem to wonder when it truly begins. There is something decidedly unsettling about our ability to place genes from flounder into strawberries (to protect them from the cold), or to create clones of sheep, or to construct a puppy from a few cells of another dog's ear. Eventually, in all likelihood, we will be able to grow spare organs and store them in refrigerators to use as replacement parts when ours wear out. Despite the uncertainties, both George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton supported the Human Genome Project, which identified the twenty thousand genes in our DNA and determined their chemical composition. Both invested heavily in the fundamental research that has followed.

From the start of his first term, George W. Bush seems to have been guided more by faith and ideology than by data in resolving scientific questions. He is hardly the only President to ignore the advice of federal scientists. To some degree, they all have. In 1998, for example, Clinton refused to lift a ban on federal funds for needle exchange—even after he was urged to do so by Harold Varmus, at the N.I.H., and Donna Shalala, his Secretary of Health and Human Services. In siding with his drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, who said that it would send the wrong message to children, Clinton acknowledged that he was making the decision against the recommendation of his scientific advisers. Yet George Bush, unlike Clinton and many other Presidents, appears to view science more as a political constituency than as an intellectual discipline or a way of life.

On issues ranging from population control to the state of the environment, and from how science is taught in the

"Go with two-iron, Kemosabe—distance in desert not what it seems."

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classroom to whether Iraq's research establishment was capable of producing weapons of mass destruction, the Administration has repeatedly turned away from traditional avenues of scientific advice. In 2003, when the Environmental Protection Agency tried to loosen standards regulating mercury pollution, sections of the proposed rules were lifted directly from industry documents. Last year, the White House acknowledged that Philip A. Cooney, the Administration official who once led the oil industry's efforts to prevent limits on greenhouse gases, had repeatedly altered government climate reports in order to minimize the relationship between such emissions and global warming. Over the protests of federal scientists, the Administration has opened thousands of acres of pristine national forest to logging, supported drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and weakened central provisions of the Endangered Species Act. In December, the E.P.A. proposed new rules governing the Clean Air Act which ignore the advice of its own staff, the recommendation of the agency's scientific advisory committee, and evidence from thousands of recent studies.

In March, 2001, just after Bush took office, the Administration withdrew American support for the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, saying that it would impose an unfair and unbearable financial burden on the U.S. economy. In the face of an overwhelming consensus that burning fossil fuels is a principal cause of global warming, a hundred and sixty countries accepted new limits on their use. The U.S., by far the world's most profligate consumer of energy, was one of only two industrialized nations to refuse. (Australia was the other.) At the time, Bush promised, "My Administration's climate-change policy will be science-based." Last year, despite pleas from hundreds of groups, and pressure from prominent allies like British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Administration declined to alter its policies, agreeing, at a G-8 summit in Scotland, only to open "a new dialogue" on the subject.

The Bush Administration has worked tirelessly to control the speech and movements of American scientists. In 2004, the Department of Health and Human Services issued a policy forbidding researchers to lend their expertise to the World Health Organization (or to travel to international scientific conferences) without the department's permission. William R. Steiger, a special assistant to the Secretary, told government scientists that if they wanted to act as consultants in meetings of the World Health Organization they would first have to agree to advocate U.S. policy. The practical implications were both chilling and farcical. That year, the department, saying that it needed to reduce the number of scientists attending international meetings, prevented more than a hundred and fifty government researchers from travelling to the International AIDS Conference, which was held in Bangkok. Department officials said they wanted to save money; their decision came after the organizer of the conference refused a request by the U.S. to invite the evangelist Franklin Graham to give a speech promoting faith-based solutions to the AIDS epidemic. If an American scientist wants to attend a meeting at the Pan American Health Organization's office in Washington, just a fifteen-minute subway ride from the N.I.H. campus, in Bethesda, Maryland, he must seek permission at least four weeks in advance.

In January, James Hansen, one of the government's most highly respected climate experts, said that the Bush Administration has made several efforts to prevent him from speaking publicly since a recent lecture in which he called for the immediate reduction of greenhouse gases. "This Administration has tried to restrict the very elements of scientific success: free and open inquiry," said Margaret A. Hamburg, who was a commissioner of health in New York City under both David Dinkins and Rudolph Giuliani and worked in the Clinton Administration as a senior health-policy adviser. "You can't do science without understanding that theories are public and views often clash. You resolve differences by experiments and research, not by toeing the line."

John H. Marburger, the President's science adviser, sees the restrictions more as a matter of good government than as an issue of free speech. "Many practices in government agencies have changed with the Administration," he told me. He also pointed out that when American scientists deliver papers at AIDS conferences and in other disciplines where social problems intersect with medical research, they are presenting not simply data but also, often, a point of view that should reflect U.S. policy. "This Administration is more management-oriented than others," he said. "In some cases, there has been a feeling that the ship could be run in a tighter fashion. I have no problem with that. . . . I understand the need to impose more restrictive controls on things like travel to conferences which are not entirely technical. The Department of Health and Human Services is dealing with a lot of societal issues that are multidimensional—like AIDS." (It took President Bush nearly eight months to settle upon Marburger, a well-regarded physicist and a former director of the Brookhaven National Laboratory. Unlike his predecessors, he was given neither the customary title of assistant to the President nor office space in the White House.)

In the Bush Administration, many types of scientific analysis and research are proscribed almost wholly on religious grounds. When the National Cancer Institute's director, Von Eschenbach, appeared at a highly technical conference on soft-tissue cancers in 2002, one of the slides he presented in his keynote address surprised many in the audience. It said simply, "We live in a country blessed by God."

On December 20th, federal district judge John E. Jones III, a Republican who was appointed by Bush, issued a scathing decision against the Dover, Pennsylvania, school board, which had attempted to require that "intelligent design" be taught in science classes alongside the theory of evolution. Intelligent design is a school of thought that suggests that life is too complex to be ascribed to evolution and therefore that animals must have been created by a supernatural "designer." There is no evidence, no theory that could be interpreted as scientific proof. Judge Jones's ruling was not ambiguous, but opposition to Darwin remains pervasive, and schools in dozens of states still teach students about natural selection and biological evolution as if they were little more than educated guesses. President Bush has addressed intelligent design just once in public, saying that he believed "both sides ought to be properly taught." Activists who argue that educators should "teach the controversy" quickly seized on his deeply ambiguous words to bolster their cause. Even Marburger, who said that he was "extremely gratified" by the Dover decision, could not offer a fuller explanation of the President's position. "That was all he has said," Marburger noted. "It was a fairly cautious statement."

When matters involve religion and the boundaries of life, the President has never wavered. In 1998, Terri Schiavo's husband, Michael, asked that her feeding tube be removed, igniting a legal war with her parents that eventually turned into a national conflict. Last March, after the tube was removed for the third time, Congress passed an "emergency measure" that attempted to force the courts to review the Schiavo case and require that the feeding tube be reinserted. President Bush signed the bill, and when the Supreme Court—for the sixth time—declined to hear the case, he spoke out in favor of what he referred to as the "culture of life." (When Schiavo died, an autopsy supported her husband's contention that she was unaware of her condition and incapable of recovering. Within days, Jeb Bush, the governor of Florida, ordered a state prosecutor to investigate whether Schiavo's husband had purposely delayed calling an ambulance when she fell ill, in 1990. Bush produced no evidence, and his actions alarmed even his Republican allies. The investigation was quickly dropped.)

There are hundreds of advisory committees attached to scientific institutions in the United States. They are usually filled both by experts and by representatives of the public, and, while they do not make policy, they do oversee most decisions. Since President Bush took office, some of the most politically sensitive committees have been dissolved. Others have been transformed into platforms that the Administration can use to pursue its social goals. When members of such boards do speak out against White House policies, they have even been removed. (In 2004, the White House dismissed Elizabeth Blackburn, a renowned cell biologist at the University of California at San Francisco, from the President's Council on Bioethics. Blackburn is a supporter of human embryonic stem-cell research. Diana Schaub, who teaches political science at Loyola College, in Baltimore, was then named to the committee. Schaub has compared the harvesting of stem cells to slavery, and once said in a speech, "Every embryo used for purposes of research is someone's blood relative.")

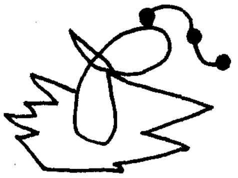
"I am very respectful of faith, belief, and any principled stance on abortion," Steven Hyman, the provost of Harvard University and a professor of neurobiology at Harvard Medical School, said recently when we met in his office in Harvard Square. Hyman was appointed to run the National Institute of Mental Health during the Clinton Administration and remained in his job after Bush

YOU WANT GRAPE? I GOT GRAPE. RASPBERRY PRESERVES? NO PROBLEM. BLUEBERRY? APPLE BUTTER? MIXED FRUIT? HEY, C'MON, BABY, DO I LOOK LIKE I DON'T HAVE MIXED FRUIT?

THE TOAST WHISPERER

took office. He is still troubled by what he saw as the intrusion of church onto state territory. "The first inkling that things were different under Bush was when I put in a slate for my national advisory council," Hyman said. "I got a call from one of the people I had nominated and he said, 'Steve, is this normal? I was just called by somebody saying he was a White House liaison to the Department of Health and Human Services. He asked me whether I made political donations, and if so to whom, and who did I vote for.' "

Hyman said that he had "no context" in which to understand this kind of inquiry. It turned out to be an experience that others had shared. "People went to Marburger to complain about it and his answer was pretty much 'What are you guys complaining about? This is normal.' " (Marburger recently told me that he doesn't think scientists should be asked whom they voted for. He has also said, however, that "it's perfectly acceptable for the President to know if someone he's appointing to one of his advisory committees supports his policies or not.") Hyman disagrees. "This is not normal," he said. "It has never happened in anybody's memory at N.I.H., and, frankly, the guy who called me was a molecular biologist. I swear to you that there is no such thing as right-wing or left-wing molecular biology." Hyman became increasingly disturbed by the effects of what he saw. "It wasn't just politics, it was an unyielding bias," he said. "They were asking people if they believed in needle exchange"—which, like Clinton, President Bush has always opposed. "As a scientist, the answer has to be *I believe in data.*" The data showing that shared needles are the most efficient way to spread H.I.V. are compelling. So are the data showing that needle exchange does not turn people into heroin addicts. "Asking the question 'Do you believe in needle exchange?' is a real violation of science. It so happens that needle exchange is a good public-health measure. And we need also to understand that there are issues in society that will trump scientific information. For many people, this is one of them. That is a political decision, and I have no problem with politicians making it. But that is a terribly unfair question to put to a scientist."



In 2001, Hyman attended the World Health Assembly in Geneva. The assembly, an annual event in which the United Nations establishes its global health priorities, focusses on a particular issue each year. That year, the topic was mental health. "We took as part of the official delegation an anti-abortion activist who lobbied the United Nations," Hyman said. "She was our representative of nursing. Normally, you would have brought a person from the American Nurses Association." The Bush approach to global health, which emphasizes "evidence-based" risk-reduction strategies such as fidelity for married couples, has been difficult for many countries to understand. (The Administration never cites a failure rate for abstinence programs, which is many times higher than the failure rate of condoms.) "Our attitudes toward birth control and condom use are very problematic in the face of a global pandemic of AIDS," Hyman said. "The woman was affable enough, but I just do not think that people who are lobbyists ought to be representing the United States and involved in formulating global health policy."

The next morning, I went to the Boston University School of Public Health to talk with Gerald T. Keusch, who is the associate dean for global health. From 1998 to the end of 2003, he served at the N.I.H. as the director of the Fogarty Center, which concentrates on international health. In the two years after he took the job, Keusch had seven openings on his advisory board and he nominated seven people to fill them. "In each case, they cleared N.I.H. in three weeks and went to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to be formally appointed," Keusch recalled. "Within another month, Donna Shalala had signed all seven letters. No questions. They were the people I wanted, and, as director, it was my responsibility to pick them." When George Bush took

SADDENING

Saddening, worse, to read in "Frost at Midnight"
Coleridge's ecstatic hymn to his newborn, Hartley,
for whom he imagines ". . . all seasons shall be sweet,"
and to find in the biographies how depressingly
their relationship deteriorated when the boy was grown:
the father struggling between his dependence on opiates
and the exertions of his recalcitrant genius, the son trying
to separate from the mostly absent but still intimidating father.

Their final contact has Hartley, a neophyte poet himself—
he'll never attain stature—abandoning his father in the street,
Coleridge in tears, not knowing, as though he were a character
in one of the more than minor tragedies he might have written
if his life had evolved more fortuitously, how to begin
to reconcile his unspoken suffering with his son's,
how to conceive of healing the hurt both had to have felt
before each reeled back to his respective isolation.

The myth was already in effect then—Wordsworth's doing?—
that creativity like Coleridge's thrives best in seclusion.
Even Coleridge, though his poem takes place with his son
beside him and friends sleeping yards away, speaks of
". . . that solitude which suits abstruser musings . . ."
So generations of writers go off to the woods, to find . . .
alcohol—Schwartz, Lowry, too many others to mention—
depression, or even—Lowell, one hates to say it—wife-abuse.

Coleridge in fact was rarely out of some intimate situation
for five minutes in his life, sharing his friends' houses
and tables, and there's the scene, saddening, too, worse,
of the poet imploring the captain of the ship ferrying him
home from Malta to administer an enema to unclog
the impacted feces of his laudanum-induced constipation.
Daily stuff for Coleridge—he hardly remarks it, poor man, poor giant—
excruciating for us, spoiled as we are, sanitized, tamed . . .

But what does the life—dope, shit, neurosis, fathers, or sons—
have to do with anything anyway? Think of innocent Clare,
twenty-eight years in insane asylums, and isn't there some *fairness*,
you might think, some *justice*, but letting yourself think that,
there's nowhere to go but bitterness, and how regret
that deluge of masterpieces to rejoice in? Coleridge, anyway,
at the end found fulfillment, and Clare, too, if not fulfillment,
then something, perhaps acceptance; even Hartley, too, something.

I was there once, in that cottage, a pack of ill-lit rooms,
at the very spot, beside the hearth, where the poem was made—
(". . . the thin blue flame . . . that film which fluttered on the grate . . .")
You could still sense something in that comfortless cell
resonating with youth and hope, which, almost on his deathbed,
Coleridge wrote, ". . . *embracing, seen as one, were love.*"
Outside, the glorious sea, the hills: easy to understand hoping
to stay in such a world forever, and the qualm to tear yourself away.

—*C. K. Williams*

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office, the Fogarty board had four new openings. Normally, three appointments to the board of twelve went to public figures and the rest to experts in various fields of international public health. "I asked for Dikembe Mutombo"—the N.B.A. basketball star—"as my public figure," Keusch said. "He has a foundation in Zaire and a real sense of the issues around H.I.V. I also wanted to appoint Torsten Wiesel"—a former president of Rockefeller University, who, in 1981, received the Nobel Prize in Medicine—"and Geeta Rao Gupta, who runs the International Center for Research on Women, and has worked extensively on issues involving abortion." His other nominee was Jane Menken, a highly regarded demographer who is now at the University of Colorado. She specializes in fertility, and has often worked in Bangladesh, which until recently had one of the highest birth rates in the world. "For weeks, and then months, I heard nothing from the department about these appointments," Keusch said. "I thought they would simply be routine. Finally, after eight months, I got a message saying they would accept Dikembe but were rejecting the three others. No explanation. No note. Nothing." Keusch was incensed, and he insisted on meeting with the people at H.H.S. who handled the decisions.

"I was told that Torsten was rejected because he has signed open letters that were critical of the President," Keusch went on. "Geeta was rejected because her organization is not opposed to abortion—which, we should not forget, *is legal* in the United States. And Jane Menken sat on the board of the Alan Guttmacher Institute"—which has always emphasized family planning and endorses the use of condoms. "That is literally what was said to me. Then I received a bunch of C.V.s in the mail. One of them was from a professor emeritus of economics at an obscure college in California that I had never heard of. His entire publication record consisted of pieces in the *Christian Science Monitor* and a Catholic monthly that took politically charged positions. That was typical of the calibre: there was nothing scientific, nothing peer-reviewed." Keusch spent the next three years at war with the H.H.S. He had to nominate twenty-six people to find seven whom the department would accept. "The Administration simply made it impossible for me to do the job I was hired for. In the end, I left and they won."

The U.C.L.A. Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine is tucked into the university's medical complex—a useful location, since all significant medical research today is collaborative. Molecular biologists, cancer experts, hematologists, even chemists and physicists have joined in the attempt to fulfill the immense promise of stem-cell biology. Few scientific endeavors have generated greater expectations (or hype). Embryonic stem cells are the biological equivalent of a blank check. Soon after birth, almost every human cell is programmed to serve a single purpose: white blood cells don't become red blood cells and neurons don't become bone cells. But that comes later. In the first days after an egg is fertilized, a cluster of about a hundred cells form into a hollow ball known as a blastocyst. At that stage—before they specialize—stem cells can be turned into any tissue or organ in the body. By harvesting and growing them, scientists hope to replace damaged cells with a healthier supply produced by patients themselves. The immune system is trained to reject foreign invaders, which is one of the central problems with transplants, but these cells wouldn't be foreign and therefore shouldn't be rejected. None of this is possible yet—there are enormous obstacles—but the almost unlimited potential has electrified scientists throughout the world.

"There have been three developments in my scientific lifetime that you could look at while they were happening and say, 'This is really big,' " Owen Witte, the stem-cell institute's director and a noted microbiologist, said. Research by David Baltimore and Witte helped lay the foundation for development of the first genuinely successful cancer therapy targeted directly at the function of a protein, the leukemia drug Gleevec. "The first, without a doubt, was molecular biology," Witte said. "We didn't call it that at the time, but it was a revolution. Absolutely mind-boggling. Second, this whole understanding of viruses and what causes human cancer. The third is genomics." He paused for a moment and smiled almost wistfully. "And stem cells are the fourth. It's the same palpable feeling of excitement when you understand that this will let you make a model for a disease. That you can study its variability and investigate how a cell develops. Then you can use those cells as therapeutics and design and test new treatments. It's a sea change. All my work in my lab is related to disease—and now we have this tool. And that is when science moves forward, when you have a new tool."

Most stem cells used in biomedical research come from spare embryos generated by in-vitro fertilization. However, extracting stem cells from the embryo destroys it, and in 1996 Congress prohibited the government from supporting such research. President Clinton avoided making any decisions on whether such work was morally acceptable until 1999. ("He completely punted on the issue," John Marburger told me.) Just before leaving office, Clinton came out in favor of "some" federal support, but few scientists were willing even to apply for funds until they were certain that their work could continue in the next Administration. Stem-cell research was one of the first major issues that Bush addressed, and in August, 2001, he announced that he would not permit federal funds to be spent to create new cell lines or to carry out research with them. Scientists were outraged at a decision that they believed did not adequately reflect the will of the American people and that could prevent the country from pursuing research in areas like cancer, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease, all of which might benefit human health at least as dramatically as antibiotics.

Bush tried to find a politically acceptable compromise, saying that research could continue on those lines which existed as of that day, "where the life-and-death decision has already been made." This, he said, would allow scientists to "explore the promise and potential of stem-cell research without crossing a fundamental moral line." His decision changed the dynamics of the way at least some major medical research is financed in the U.S.—shifting it from the federal government to those states and private institutions which have chosen to support such research. California was the first to revolt, passing a ballot measure in 2004 to allocate three billion dollars to create the Institute for Regenerative Medicine. Proposition 71 received nearly two-thirds of the vote; several other states have also moved forward with legislation and, along with major private organizations, have provided new sources of funds.

Yet, even where money is available, the research has been hindered by federal restraints. At places like Harvard University, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, in New York, and U.C.L.A.'s stem-cell institute, researchers have been bound by red tape since the President's decision. Every dollar spent on stem cells must be segregated from research financed with public money. "Our best young scientists, who should be thinking about their experiments, have to be very clear about which pencils they can touch and which they can't," Steven Hyman told me. "Who would want to operate in those conditions?" A modern laboratory requires equipment—electron microscopes, centrifuges, cell fractionators, and powerful computers—that costs millions of dollars, and those tools are routinely shared, except with people working on stem cells. "If we have a postdoc working on a stem-cell project and he needs to spend half an hour a week using a DNA sequencer or something else that costs a hundred thousand dollars, we cannot let him use one owned by the university," Hyman said. "We might even have to buy a new one."

There are other complications. "If we discover something exciting in a stem-cell lab and we want to test it with materials in another lab, or use it in an experiment, we can't unless those experiments and those labs have no federal money attached to them," Owen Witte said. "Then, there is the infrastructure. If portions of this building were constructed with federal dollars"—it is the rare building on a public university campus in the United States that is not—"we would be proscribed from using it, even from establishing specially segregated labs." Witte added that it was not even clear whether the results of private stem-cell research could be published in a scientific journal that receives federal funds or whether that information could then be used in other experiments by scientists who receive federal support (or work at places that do). "It is an incredible encumbrance, and it has hurt us in every possible way," he said. "If you really want science to succeed, it needs a bit of unfettered creativity. If you regulate it and restrict it and wrap it in chains, you are taking away the very essence of what science is supposed to do."

"I'd like to go somewhere with warm water, balmy breezes, and no extradition treaty."

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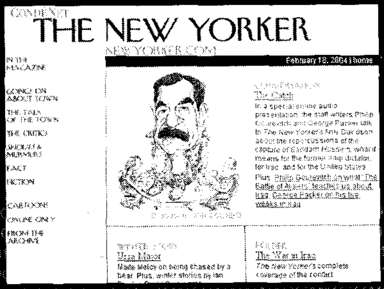
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THE NEW YORKER
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February 16, 2004 | home
IN THE MAGAZINE
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
THE TALK OF THE TOWN
THE CRITICS
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FACT
FICTION
CARTOONS
ONLINE ONLY
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In a special online audio presentation, the staff writers Philip Gourevitch and George Packer talk to *The New Yorker*'s Amy Davidson about the repercussions of the capture of Saddam Hussein, what it means for the former Iraqi dictator, for Iraq, and for the United States.

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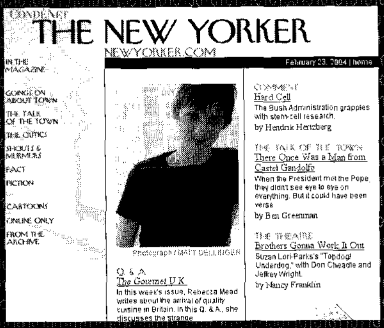
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February 23, 2004 | home
IN THE MAGAZINE
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
THE TALK OF THE TOWN
THE CRITICS
SHOUTS & MURMURS
FACT
FICTION
CARTOONS
ONLINE ONLY
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Photograph / MATT DELLINGER

Q. & A.

The Gourmet U.K.

In this week's issue, Rebecca Mead writes about the arrival of quality cuisine in Britain. In this Q. & A., she discusses the strange

COMMENT

Hard Cell

The Bush Administration grapples with stem-cell research.

by Hendrik Hertzberg

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

There Once Was a Man from Castel Gandolfo

When the President met the Pope, they didn't see eye to eye on everything. But it could have been verse.

by Ben Greenman

THE THEATRE

Brothers Gonna Work It Out

Suzan-Lori Parks's "Topdog/Underdog," with Don Cheadle and Jeffrey Wright.

by Nancy Franklin

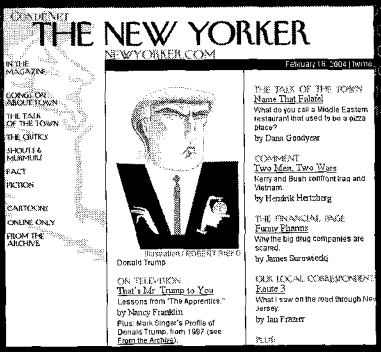
CONDÉNET
THE NEW YORKER
NEWYORKER.COM
February 16, 2004 | home
IN THE MAGAZINE
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
THE TALK OF THE TOWN
THE CRITICS
SHOUTS & MURMURS
FACT
FICTION
CARTOONS
ONLINE ONLY
FROM THE ARCHIVE

Illustration / ROBERT RISKO

Donald Trump

ON TELEVISION

That's Mr. Trump to You

Lessons from "The Apprentice."

by Nancy Franklin

Plus: Mark Singer's Profile of Donald Trump, from 1997 (see From the Archive).

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Name That Falafel

What do you call a Middle Eastern restaurant that used to be a pizza place?

by Dana Goodyear

COMMENT

Two Men, Two Wars

Kerry and Bush confront Iraq and Vietnam.

by Hendrik Hertzberg

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

Funny Pharms

Why the big drug companies are scared.

by James Surowiecki

OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Route 3

What I saw on the road through New Jersey.

by Ian Frazier

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President Bush identified sixty cell lines in 2001 that he considered morally permissible to use for experiments, and that number was later expanded by government officials to seventy-eight. Witte laughed at those figures. "There aren't thirty," he said. (The Bush Administration frequently contends that the lines that existed in 2001 are sufficient for current research needs. James Battey, the director of the National Institute on Deafness, has been assigned to monitor the state of stem-cell research. At a congressional hearing held to determine last year's budget appropriations, Battey was asked whether existing cell lines were sufficient for researchers in the United States. His answer, which strained the bonds of English usage, has been posted on more than one laboratory bulletin board: "It is difficult to argue that a greater number of available lines, with more potential functional diversity, would be detrimental to the research effort.")

Witte, a soft-spoken man who clearly prefers looking through a microscope to engaging in political machinations, was dressed casually in blue corduroy pants and a jean jacket. His gray hair is short and he has an easy smile, yet when he talks about the ban his facial muscles begin to clench. "If you are interested in early development, if you are interested in cell biology, if you are interested in how cells develop—this edict tells you that you may not think outside of a previously held point of view. You may not build bridges or learn anything beyond what is known. Science is a progressive field and each step leads to the next. The idea that this is enough for you guys, that nobody is going to have a new idea, that nobody is going to do it better—that is antithetical to progress and science."

Witte and most of his colleagues are aware that, too often, the promise of stem-cell science gets confused with reality. Embryonic stem cells have been advertised as cures for nearly every ailment of mankind. So far, at least, they cure nothing. (Nor has it helped that the work of Hwang Woo Suk, the South Korean scientist who had claimed to have cloned human cells—a major step toward the goal of converting a patient's cells into new tissue that can be used to treat diseases—was recently found to have been fabricated.)

Witte's lab often concentrates on bone-marrow transplants—a cure for many ailments. The technology has been established and it works, but it is not available to everyone. Marrow needs to match genetically and there is always a shortage, particularly among certain ethnic groups. Scientists are convinced that stem cells can change that. "There are examples in the literature of a cell that can be programmed to become a pancreatic cell or a liver cell," Witte said. "That is exactly what we want." Sugar, for example, is broken down by the hormone insulin, which is produced by special cells in the pancreas. People develop diabetes because those cells have been destroyed. "Now, to be able to make a pancreatic cell from a stem cell," Witte said, "that is exciting. But the more important question is 'Can you make ten to the ninth of them?' " (Ten to the ninth is the scientific notation for the number one billion.) "Because that is what we would need to make it work as a therapy. We need engineers who are experts in large-scale cell culture and other specialists. So, yes, the immediacy of this has been oversold. Absolutely. But that doesn't mean I am not excited." He went on, "Yet it simply cannot be done without a greater ability to grow a variety of stem-cell lines. Diseases usually involve many genes. You cannot study them with a random selection of cells that just happen to have existed in August of 2001."

We walked over to his lab to look at one of the "Presidential cell lines." (Each has a specific genetic fingerprint, so it can be easily identified.) Witte introduced me to Shuling Guo, a Chinese molecular biologist on the institute's staff. Shuling led me to a microscope and told me to look at a slide that she had placed beneath it. "There it is," Witte said, "the giant ethical controversy staring you in the face." I seemed to be looking at a bunch of little soccer balls packed together. "What you are seeing are thousands of human stem cells," Shuling said. Her job is to turn them into red blood cells. "Look carefully," she told me, as the cluster slowly started to become visible. "Can you see a dot of red?" I did. In fact, I saw three little red pinpoints. "The cells are sucking iron out of the environment and making hemoglobin"—a vital protein that ferries oxygen to cells around the body. "If you suffered from a fatal anemia, we should be able to cure it. But we have maybe five red cells there. We need to figure out a way to make five billion."

The war over the ethics of using embryos in research has proved costly to American medicine. Not only has it slowed the pace of progress but for the first time other countries have moved ahead of the U.S. The United Kingdom, for example, has established several centers for stem-cell scientists. The ban has also discouraged researchers from contemplating careers in what would otherwise be considered the most exciting area of medicine. Nobody disputes the promise of stem-cell research, yet the moral complications that surround it are also real, and unlikely to soon disappear. The questions are nearly impossible to answer: Is breaking open a two-day-old stem cell murder? Is it possible to harm a blastocyst—something without nerves or human qualities? What about discarding embryos that have been left over at in-vitro-fertilization clinics instead of using them for research? People who oppose stem-cell research often describe embryos as potential human beings. "Like a snowflake," President Bush said in his 2001 speech, "each of these embryos is unique, with the unique genetic potential of an individual human being." Yet for many Americans it is difficult to feel the same compassion for people who don't yet exist as for those who do. According to repeated polling, a majority of Catholics, Protestants, and evangelical Christians believe that stem cells from embryos should be used for research, yet there is no consensus on the question of when life begins, or on the relative value of embryos and living human beings.

"You have to separate moral questions from the questions of science," C. Everett Koop said when I asked him recently if he could think of any way to resolve this issue. Koop is the most famously right-wing man ever appointed to a senior position in the Public Health Service. He will be ninety this year, and he has been out of government for nearly two decades, but he remains active, and runs an institute named for him at Dartmouth College's medical school. In 1981, when President Ronald Reagan nominated him to the position of Surgeon

General, Koop was a noted pediatric surgeon from Philadelphia with the beard of Abraham Lincoln and a strident history of opposition to abortion. Even today, his 1979 book, “Whatever Happened to the Human Race?,” remains a touchstone for those who are opposed to legal abortions. But he had no public-health experience. Surgeons General are usually confirmed quickly and then instantly forgotten—before Koop, few Americans could have named one. No public-health official in American history has generated more controversy. Liberals on Capitol Hill denounced Reagan's choice for what it was: a blatant attempt to place ideological fealty over the demands of public health. The battle over Koop's confirmation dragged on for nearly a year, but in the end he took his position at the head of the Public Health Service.

Koop then proceeded to alienate nearly every supporter he had on the religious and political right. To fight the growing epidemic of AIDS, he recommended a program of compulsory sex education in the schools, and argued that children should be taught how to use condoms. He campaigned vigorously against smoking in public spaces, enraging tobacco companies. When President Reagan asked him to prepare a report on the psychological effects of abortion, conservatives finally felt certain of the result. Yet, after meeting with activists on both sides, and reviewing hundreds of scientific publications, Koop declined to say that abortion was always more damaging than the alternative. He even refused to issue a report, telling the President that there weren't enough data to support either “the preconceived notions of those pro life or those pro choice.” The Administration, once again, was shocked. “You know, I never changed my stripes during all that time, and I still haven't,” Koop said. “What I did in that job was what any well-trained doctor or scientist would do: I looked at the data and then presented the facts to the American people. In science, you can't hide from the data.

“I have been away for some time, and I am more of a spectator now,” he went on. “But stem-cell research is as volatile as any subject can get. People are completely driven by their beliefs or their desires. Not the facts. Scientists have hyped it, and often they act as if there were no ethical considerations at all. That is not true. But you have to weigh the facts, and this Administration doesn't seem to take that approach. One thing that I have learned is that belief doesn't change reality.”

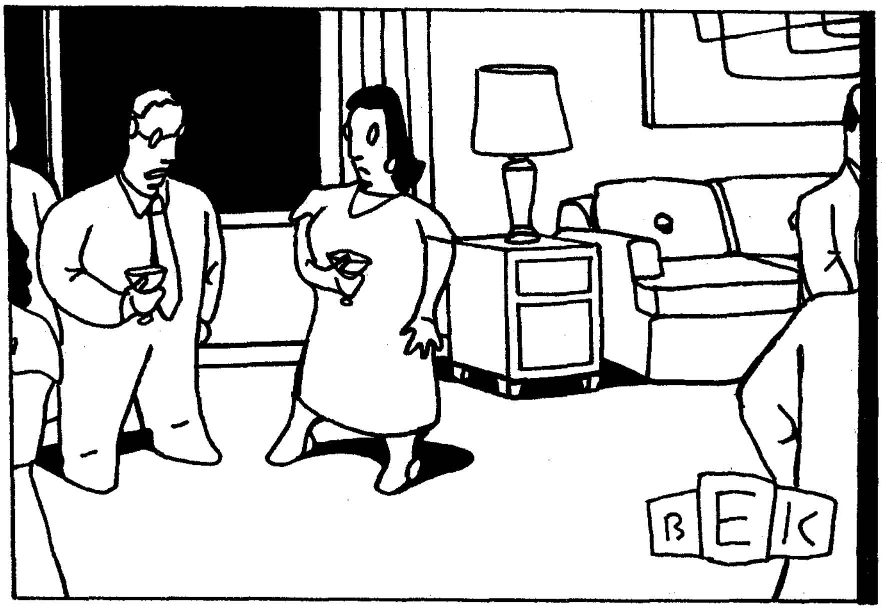
The problems facing American science have not been created by a single politician or party: they reflect a fissure in society which has grown wider as science has edged closer to the roots of life itself. “I have never seen as much tension between science and society,” Alan Leshner, the chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, told me. “Some of it is religion and some of it is ideology. But science is now encroaching in areas that are too close to core human values. And it makes people afraid.” Leshner was the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse from 1994 to 2001. “Let's look at behavioral genetics. In the old days, when we talked about there being genes for schizophrenia, everybody said, ‘Wow. We have to find that.’ Now we know it's broader. Maybe we won't need a gene for schizophrenia; instead, it makes more sense to talk about types of schizophrenia. Fine. Then we move to where we are now: looking for individual symptoms, some of which are normal personality traits taken to the extreme—like cognition. So now we have to study the genetics of cognition. Well, cognition is intelligence. And when you say, ‘Let's go back and study the genetics of intelligence,’ people go batshit.

“And then that's the end of it,” he said. “What we are seeing is the empowerment of ideologues who have the ability to influence the course of science far more than ever before. They say, ‘I don't like the science, I don't like what it is showing,’ and therefore they ignore it. And we are at a place in this country today where that can work. The basic integrity of science is under siege.”

The United States now educates fewer scientists every year. In 2005, seniors in American high schools performed below the average of twenty-one countries on a test of general knowledge of mathematics and science—and in advanced courses the U.S. was close to the bottom. Federal research investments are shrinking as a share of the U.S. economy—just as other nations are increasing theirs. In this year's State of the Union speech, President Bush acknowledged that we need to educate more scientists to remain competitive. (He then went on the road to tell students that they ought not think of researchers as the “nerd patrol.”) But China and South Korea are raising basic research budgets by ten per cent each year. This year, America's will drop by one half of one per cent. In 2004, more than six hundred thousand engineers graduated from Chinese universities. In India, the number was three hundred and fifty thousand. In America, the figure was not quite seventy thousand. For the first time, the United States now imports more high-technology products than it exports. In fact, the U.S. share of such exports has fallen in the past twenty years, from thirty per cent to seventeen per cent. Rather than make up for the loss of trained scientists by increasing immigration, however, the country since September 11, 2001, has invoked harsher restrictions than ever before.

“My friends in the European Union are ecstatic,” Leshner said. “Between the visa problems—preventing the best students from China and India from entering this country to study or work—and the stem-cell ban, our competitors are just in heaven. While we are restricting research, the E.U. is working hard on ways to increase mobility. They are welcoming scientists from other countries. They are not fools.”

Late last year, the American Museum of Natural History mounted the most significant exhibit ever devoted to Charles Darwin. After returning from his voyage on the Beagle, in 1836, Darwin waited more than two decades before he published “The Origin of Species.” As Michael Novacek, the museum's provost of science and the curator of its division of paleontology, put it when we walked through the exhibit, “Charles Darwin was a creationist when he stepped onto the Beagle. And he was completely aware of how his new theory would be received when he got off.” In 1871, Darwin published his second book, “The Descent of Man,” in which he attempted to explain his view of how



"I don't have a lot of edge—I just hate you."

humans had evolved from other animals. That book's assertion that humans were related to monkeys became one of the most inflammatory ideas in the history of science. It remains so today, particularly in the United States. For the past two decades, polls have shown consistently that more than half of all Americans believe that humans were created directly by God. A similar number don't believe that we share a common ancestor with apes. And only twenty-two per cent say that we evolved from an earlier species.

In Judge Jones's December ruling on intelligent design in Pennsylvania, he excoriated the Dover school board for requiring teachers to tell students that evolution is no more than a theory. He wrote that such an action "presents students with a religious alternative masquerading as a scientific theory, directs them to consult a creationist text as though it were a science resource." Judge Jones found that intelligent design is nothing but creationism with a fancy name. His argument was cogent and powerful, but will it matter? Perhaps, but for the Darwin exhibit in New York—coming eighty years after a twenty-four-year-old high-school teacher named John Scopes was put on trial in Tennessee for teaching the theory of evolution—the American Museum of Natural History failed to find even a single corporate sponsor.

Science is powerful, and it can seem miraculous. Clearly, it has transformed the way humans live, and for centuries the general view has been that science is neither good nor bad—that it merely supplies information, and that new information is always beneficial. That simplistic view makes less sense every year. The products of our most successful experiments often fill people with dread. The atomic bomb—not to mention experiments by Nazi doctors or those carried out in the United States on black men with syphilis—has demonstrated why that fear is not wholly without reason. Nor are conservatives or Christian activists the only people to misuse data or take advantage of their complexity. There are certainly risks associated with growing genetically modified products, yet, after billions of doses have been consumed, there has never been a documented case of a person dying from eating one. That has not prevented leading environmentalists from working to ban them. Nuclear energy is another idea to which liberals have been slavishly opposed, refusing to apply common sense to science, or to compare risks and benefits in any meaningful way.

Americans want to believe in "nature" in part because they have so often felt misled by science. A book called "Natural Cures 'They' Don't Want You to Know About," by Kevin Trudeau, has been on the top of the best-seller lists for almost a year. The author promises that those who read to the end will "know categorically, absolutely, with a hundred per cent certainty that there is a natural cure for your disease and you will know exactly what to do to cure yourself of your disease and remain healthy for life—all without drugs or surgery." Clearly, the Bush Administration alone is not responsible for America's fear of progress. But it has widened the gulf between truth and belief immensely.

When I went to see Andrew Von Eschenbach, in his office on the N.I.H. campus, to discuss his leadership of the cancer institute and the F.D.A., he didn't want to talk about data or the policies of the Administration. But he did share his vision of a medical future so "profound" that he calls it the "molecular metamorphosis." He said, "It doesn't change one thing—it changes everything, and the future will look no more like the past than a butterfly looks like a caterpillar." Von Eschenbach is a pleasant and self-effacing man, and he told me, as he has often told others, that this new approach to medicine will help "eliminate suffering and death due to cancer by 2015." I asked him how we could accomplish such a remarkable feat—after all, the war on cancer has been waged for decades with only moderate success. "We are going to morph the current reality into the new reality and that will go on over the next ten years," he said.

Many of Von Eschenbach's colleagues are convinced that such unrealistic statements will weaken the position of science as the preëminent force of progress in modern society. In a recent commentary published in the journal *Cell*, Paul Nurse, a Nobel laureate and the president of Rockefeller University, addressed Von Eschenbach's statements about cancer treatment directly. They "cannot be justified even as a statement of aspiration," he wrote, "because when we fail to deliver, as we surely will...we will lose the confidence of both the politicians and the public." He then turned to a much larger question, the future of American science: "Present policies are set to damage a whole generation of young research workers, and the negative impact on recruitment of the next generation of scientists will be seen for years to come." ♦

STEVE BRODNER

On the second day of David Souter's appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee, in September, 1990, Gordon Humphrey, a Republican senator from New Hampshire, with something of the manner of a boarding-school headmaster in a satiric novel, asked the nominee, "Do you remember the old television program 'Queen for a Day'?"

"Well, it wasn't something that I spent much of my youth watching," Souter said, "but I've heard the term."

Humphrey fussed with papers and went on, "Yes, well, going back to the days of black-and-white TV, let's play 'Senator for a Day.' "

"I still have a black-and-white TV," Souter put in.

"I don't doubt it," Humphrey said, and continued:

> I hope you don't watch it much. My theory is that nothing would do more good for this country than for everyone to smash his television set . . . because people would begin—especially parents and children—would begin talking and children would begin doing their homework instead of watching—having their minds filled with rubbish every evening from our wonderful networks.

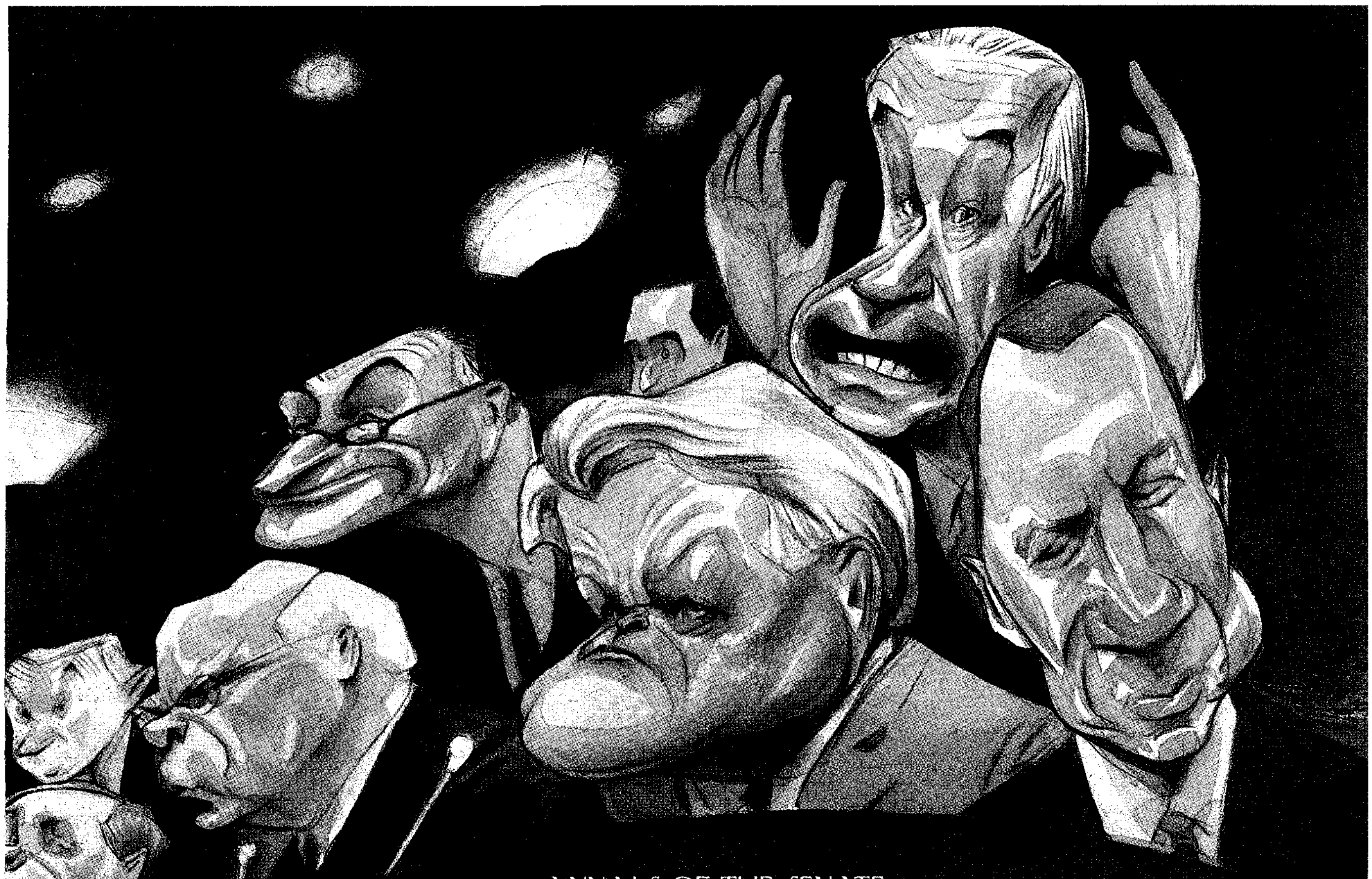
Humphrey collected himself and went on to propose that Souter put himself in the shoes of a senator interrogating a Supreme Court nominee and asked him what he would be most concerned about. He added that he was asking not so much for his own benefit as for that of "the young people who are tuned in—"

"On television," the voice of a quick-witted Joseph Biden, the chairman of the committee, rang out.

"On television, yes," Humphrey conceded, as Souter smiled puckishly and the audience burst into laughter.

I

During the confirmation hearings for John Roberts last September, old black-and-white movies came to mind unbidden. Watching Roberts on television was like watching one of the radiantly wholesome heroes that Jimmy Stewart, Joel McCrea, and Henry Fonda rendered so incisively in the films of Capra, Lubitsch, and Sturges. They don't make men like that anymore. But Roberts had all their anachronistic attributes: the grace, charm, and humor of a special American sort in which decency and kindness are heavily implicated, and from which sexuality is entirely absent. It was out of the question that such a man be denied a place on the Supreme Court. The plot of the hearing hinged not on whether



ANNALS OF THE SENATE

THE ART OF TESTIFYING

The confirmation hearings as theatre.

BY JANET MALCOLM

Roberts would be confirmed but on how the eight Democrats on the committee—Patrick Leahy, of Vermont; Edward Kennedy, of Massachusetts; Joseph Biden, of Delaware; Dianne Feinstein, of California; Russell Feingold, of Wisconsin; Charles Schumer, of New York; Herbert Kohl, of Wisconsin; and Richard Durbin, of Illinois—would perform.

In his opening statement, Roberts offered a baseball analogy to illustrate his notion of judicial seemliness. He likened judges to umpires, who "don't make the rules; they apply them. . . . They make sure everybody plays by the rules, but it is a limited role." He added, "Nobody ever went to a ballgame to see the umpire." At the game of Senate confirmation, however, Roberts was precisely the person everybody had come to see: he was the batter to whom eighteen pitchers would pitch. Eight of them would try to strike him out while ten (Arlen Specter, of Pennsylvania; Orrin Hatch, of Utah; Charles Grassley, of Iowa; Jon Kyl, of Arizona; Mike DeWine, of Ohio; Jeff Sessions, of Alabama; Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina; John Cornyn, of Texas; Sam Brownback, of Kansas; and Tom Coburn, of Oklahoma) would insure that he got on base.

The fastballs that the Democrats hurled were fuelled largely by memorandums that Roberts had written as a young attorney in the Reagan Administration advising his superiors on how best to undermine civil rights, voting rights, affirmative action, and antidiscrimination legislation. The written record of what Kennedy called "a narrow and cramped and, perhaps, even a mean-spirited view of the law" was the focus of the Democrats' pointed questioning. The Democrats invited Roberts to disavow the misguided views of his youth—Surely you don't believe such stuff now? they asked him in not so many words. And in not so many words Roberts indicated that he still did. But words were not decisive in this hearing. Roberts's dazzlingly sympathetic persona soared over the proceedings and enveloped them in its aura. In the third round of questions, Charles Schumer

The Democrats came home from the hearing for Samuel Alito as if they had been beaten up by a rival gang in a bar.

looked over his glasses at Roberts and said, "You did speak at length on many issues and sounded like you were conveying your views to us, but when one went back and read the transcript each evening, there was less than met the ear that afternoon." But in fact it was the eye that created the illusion.

Roberts had a wonderful way of listening to questions. His face was exquisitely responsive. The constant play of expression on his features put one in mind of nineteenth-century primers of acting in which emotions—pleasure, agreement, dismay, uncertainty, hope, fear—are illustrated on the face of a model. When it was his turn to speak, he did so with equal mesmerizing expressiveness. Whenever he said "With all due respect, Senator"—the stock phrase signalling disagreement—he looked so genuinely respectful, almost regretful, that one could easily conclude that he was agreeing with his interlocutor rather than demurring. During the first round of questions, Biden flashed his famous insincere smile and said, "This shouldn't be a game of gotcha." In point of fact, the Democrats—notably Biden himself—"got" Roberts a number of times, but no matter what disagreeable things were said to him he maintained his invincible pleasantness. Biden scored heavily, for example, when he said:

> In 1999 you said in response to a question . . . "You know, we've gotten to a point these days where we think the only way we can show we're serious about a problem is if we pass a federal law, whether it's the Violence Against Women Act or anything else. The fact of the matter is conditions are different in different states, and state laws are more relevant . . . more attuned to different situations in New York as opposed to Minnesota. And that's what the federal system is based upon."
>
> Judge, tell me how a guy beating up his wife in Minnesota is any different condition in New York.

What could Roberts say? He could only flounder, but he floundered so prettily that Biden had to laugh and say "O.K." Schumer, too, repeatedly won debating points but never penetrated Roberts's armor of charm. In the second round of questioning, Schumer offered this inspired set piece:

> You agree we should be finding out your philosophy and method of legal reasoning, modesty, stability, but when we try to find out what modesty and stability mean, what your philosophy means, we don't get any answers.
>
> It's as if I asked you: What kind of movies do you like? Tell me two or three good movies. And you say, "I like movies with good acting. I like movies with good directing. I like movies with good cinematography." And I ask you, "No, give me an example of a good movie." You don't name one. I say, "Give me an example of a bad movie." You won't name one. Then I ask you if you like "Casablanca," and you respond by saying, "Lots of people like 'Casablanca.' " You tell me it's widely settled that "Casablanca" is one of the great movies.

Arlen Specter, the chairman of the committee, intervened to say that Schumer's time was up, and that there would be a fifteen-minute break. Roberts meekly asked if he could respond before the break, and, when given permission to do so, he said, "First, 'Dr. Zhivago' and 'North by Northwest' "—bringing down the house. Roberts went on to give an unconvincing defense of his evasiveness, but it was too late—there was too much good feeling wafting through the room like lavender air-freshener—for the weakness of his argument to matter. Roberts's performance gave the word "disarming" new meaning. In the end, three Democrats—who had been no less pointed in their questioning than their fellow-Democrats—voted to confirm Roberts. "I will vote my hopes and not my fears," Herbert Kohl said, confessing, "I was troubled by parts of Judge Roberts's record, but I was impressed by the man himself." The two other Democrats who voted for Roberts—Patrick Leahy and Russell Feingold—similarly allowed Roberts's persona to lull them into unguarded optimism. Even Democrats who voted against Roberts acknowledged his spectacular winningness.

But no performance can be entirely without flaw, and there was one extraordinary moment when Roberts was taken by surprise and propelled into uncharacteristic, unattractive at-a-lossness. Dianne Feinstein—a thirties-movie character in her own right, with her Mary Astor loveliness, and air of just having arrived with a lot of suitcases—was questioning him. As she later recalled, "When I couldn't get a sense of his judicial philosophy, I attempted to get a sense of his temperament and values, and I asked him about the end-of-life decisions, clearly decisions that are gut-wrenching, difficult, and extremely

"Why can't you just wear a doggie sweater?"

personal." Feinstein looked at Roberts and said:

> I have been through two end of life situations, one with my husband, one with my father, both suffering terrible cancers, a lot of pain, enormous debilitation. Let me ask you this question this way: If you were in that situation with someone you deeply love and saw the suffering, who would you want to listen to, your doctor or the government telling you what to do?

Roberts, his brow furrowed with concern and empathy, replied:

> Well, Senator, in that situation, obviously, you want to talk and take into account the views and heartfelt concerns of the loved one that you're trying to help in that situation, because you know how they are viewing this. You know what they mean when they're saying things like what their wishes are and their concerns are and, of course, consulting with their physicians.

Huh? For once, the ear trumped the eye. What was Roberts saying? What had happened to his syntax? Why all those "you"s and "they"s when the answer clearly called for an "I"? As Roberts went on speaking in this unsettling language of avoidance, Feinstein coldly interrupted, "That wasn't my question." "I'm sorry," Roberts said demurely. "I'm trying to see your feelings as a man," Feinstein said. But she wasn't able to sustain the moment. She fell into the trap of rephrasing her question in a way that allowed Roberts to say, "Well, that's getting into a legal question." Feinstein quickly backed off. "O.K. I won't go there," she said, as the split screen showed Roberts smiling with relief and perhaps a bit of triumph.

The Republican bridesmaids performed their ceremonial function with varying degrees of perfunctoriness. Specter, who had the role of chairman to play as well, played it as a courtly old man. A recent battle with cancer had left him thin and almost without hair. It was hard to see in this diminished figure the dark-haired man who fifteen years earlier had interrogated Anita Hill with such arrogant ruthlessness. No one who watched the Clarence Thomas hearings will forget the look of hatred that Hill directed toward Specter as she parried his assault on her credibility with her weapon of steely truthfulness. Specter no longer inspires hatred, of course, but he remains an obscurely sour figure. Some fundamental unlovableness adheres. It doesn't help that he speaks with excruciating slowness, as if he were a Southerner.

Lindsey Graham, who is a Southerner, speaks at Northern speed, and to highly entertaining effect. When it was his turn to question Roberts, he didn't just stroke him. He cut to the chase:

> You were picked by a conservative president because you have associated yourself with the conservative administrations in the past, advising conservative presidents about conservative policies. And there's another selection to be made, and you're going to get the same type person. And you can—I'm not even talking to you now—to expect anything else is just not fair. I don't expect—I didn't expect President Clinton to pick you.

I'm not even talking to you now. Graham brought to the surface what is always lying just below it at televised Supreme Court confirmation hearings: namely, that the Judiciary Committee members are never merely talking to the nominee; they are always talking to their constituents as well.

The confirmation hearing as we know it today evolved over the past century. In his excellent book "The Selling of Supreme Court Nominees" (1995), John Anthony Maltese lays stress on the inescapably political character of the nomination process. Since the early days of the Republic—starting with the Borking of George Washington's appointee for chief justice, John Rutledge—Supreme Court nominations have been fiercely fought over by rival senatorial factions. However, only in the twentieth century did these fights become public spectacles. A pivotal event, in Maltese's account, was the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment, in 1913, which changed the method by which senators come into office—from appointment by the state legislature to direct election—and intensified their activity as jumpy instruments of public will. The first public confirmation hearing took place in 1916, for Louis Brandeis (the first Jew to be named to the high court). Dozens of witnesses, pro and con, flocked to the hearing, but Brandeis himself did not choose to come. His advisers felt, Maltese writes, that "to do so would give the appearance that Brandeis was on trial." Not until 1925 did a nominee—Harlan Fiske Stone—testify before the Judiciary Committee, and thirty more years went by before it became customary, if not obligatory, for the nominee to testify. Between 1930 and 1955, four nominees testified and fifteen didn't. Since 1955, when the second John Marshall Harlan was nominated, every nominee has testified.

Brandeis's advisers were right: the Supreme Court nominee, sitting alone at a table facing a tribunal of legislators seated above him on a dais, is on trial. But so, of course, are the legislators. Each one knows that when he is up for reëlection voters will remember (or someone will remind them of) his words and his demeanor. Graham presently abandoned all pretense of examining Roberts. "Let's talk about righting wrongs here," he said to the folks back home, and went on:

> I think it stinks that somebody can burn the flag and that's called speech. What do you think about that?
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> ROBERTS: Well [laughter]. We had the Flag Protection Act after the Supreme Court concluded that it was protected speech.
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> GRAHAM: Show me where their term "symbolic speech" is in the Constitution.
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> ROBERTS: Well, it's not.
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> GRAHAM: It's not. They just made it up, didn't they? And I think it stinks that a kid can't go to school and say a prayer if he wants to voluntarily. What do you think about that?
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> ROBERTS: That's something that's probably inappropriate for me to comment on.
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> GRAHAM: What do you think Ronald Reagan thought about that?
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> ROBERTS: His view was that voluntary school prayer was appropriate.
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> GRAHAM: I think it's not right for elected officials to be unable to talk about or protect the unborn. What do you think about that?
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> ROBERTS: Well, again, Senator . . .

The fifty-year-old Graham has a gift for comedy—he delivers his lines as if he were working a night-club crowd—and exudes an air of cynicism that right-wing politicians do not usually permit themselves, and that is very refreshing. The right-wing politician Sam Brownback has a more conventional style. During his questioning of Roberts, he paused to say that because of Roe v. Wade "we now have forty million fewer children in this country to bless us with" and that "eighty per cent to ninety per cent of children prenatally diagnosed with Down's Syndrome never get here—never get here." Roberts as gracefully declined to engage with the anti-abortion Republicans as he had declined to engage with the pro-choice Democrats. He was like the host of a successful and elegant party. Everybody could go home feeling good and good about himself.

"I'm defrosting the basement freezer—do you still want this?"

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No one had spilled his champagne or been rude. When, four months later, Roberts joined Scalia and Thomas in their dissent to the majority opinion in Gonzalez v. Oregon, which upheld the state's law permitting assisted suicide, no one even seemed to feel betrayed. Good parties cast lovely long shadows.

2

The Democrats came home from the hearing for Samuel Alito as if they had been beaten up by a rival gang in a bar. At the Roberts hearing, they had been vigorous and assured, sometimes even magnificent, in their defense of liberal values. At the Alito hearing, they were erratic and disoriented, as if suffering from a malaise they had fallen into between the two proceedings. In fact, what they were suffering from was the nominee. In his opening statement, Alito told this story:

> During the previous weeks, an old story about a lawyer who argued a case before the Supreme Court has come to my mind, and I thought I might begin this afternoon by sharing that story. The story goes as follows. This was a lawyer who had never argued a case before the court before. And when the argument began, one of the justices said, How did you get here? Meaning how had his case worked its way up through the court system. But the lawyer was rather nervous and he took the question literally and he said—and this was some years ago—he said, "I came here on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad."

Throughout the hearing, in answer to almost every question, Alito said, in effect, that he had come here on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad—and thus defeated every attempt to engage him in a dialogue. Each answer ended the matter then and there. He was like a chauffeur who speaks only when spoken to, and doesn't presume to converse. While Alito listened to questions, his face was expressionless. When giving answers, he spoke in a mild, uninflected voice. His language was ordinary and wooden. His manner was sober and quiet. He was a negligible, neutral presence.

It seemed scarcely believable that, in his fifteen years on the federal bench, this innocuous man had consistently ruled against other harmless individuals in favor of powerful institutions, and that these rulings were sometimes so far out of the mainstream consensus that other conservatives on the court were moved to protest their extremity. Or that in 1985, on an application for a job in the Reagan Justice Department, he had written, "I am particularly proud of my contributions in recent cases in which the government has argued in the Supreme Court that . . . the Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion." And, further, that "in college I developed a deep interest in constitutional law, motivated in large part by disagreement with Warren Court decisions, particularly in the areas of criminal procedure, the Establishment Clause, and reapportionment."

If Roberts was a pill the Democrats could agree to swallow even before tasting its delicious sugar coating, and Harriet Miers was a pig in a poke that some Democrats were prepared to buy, Alito was a nominee no Democrat could accept. But no Democrat could touch him. The impassive Alito paralyzed the Democrats. Their hopes of blocking the nomination by bringing forward two stains on his character—his membership in a notorious organization called Concerned Alumni of Princeton, which opposed the admission of women and minorities; and his failure to recuse himself in a case involving the Vanguard company, in which he had a financial stake—were decisively dashed. The stains proved too small—the garment remained presentable.

Twenty years ago, William Rehnquist, at the hearing for his elevation to Chief Justice, offered a model for how to parry embarrassing questions about your past. When asked about reports that as a young poll watcher he had harassed minority voters, Rehnquist shook his head sadly and said, "No, I don't think that's correct," and when asked about a restrictive clause in the lease to his country house barring "members of the Hebrew race" he said, "I certainly don't recall it." Alito, similarly, didn't recall joining the Concerned Alumni. "I have racked my memory," he said each time he was asked why he had joined. Nor could he explain why he hadn't recused himself in the Vanguard case. The Democrats realized too late that their pursuit of the Concerned Alumni and Vanguard matters was a trap. This time, the Republican bridesmaids didn't merely simper. They hastened to close ranks and attack the Democrats for their cruel badgering of Alito.

Lindsey Graham rose joyfully to the occasion. Rules of seniority placed him late on the program (he was elected to the Senate in 2002) and gave him the material for great shtick. He did a little preliminary routine with Vanguard ("Why would Judge Alito sit down in the corner of a room and say, I think I've got a conflict, but I'm just going to let it go and hear the case anyway?") and moved on to the Concerned Alumni:

> GRAHAM: Now this organization that was mentioned very prominently earlier in the day, did you ever write an article for this organization?

> ALITO: No, I did not.
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> GRAHAM: O.K. And some quotes were shown, from people who did write for this organization, that you disavowed. Do you remember that exchange?
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> ALITO: I disavow them. I deplore them. They represent things that I have always stood against and I can't express too strongly . . .
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> GRAHAM: If you don't mind the suspicious nature that I have is that you may be saying that because you want to get on the Supreme Court; that you're disavowing this now because it doesn't look good. And really what I would look at to believe you're not—and I'm going to be very honest with you—is: how have you lived your life? Are you really a closet bigot?

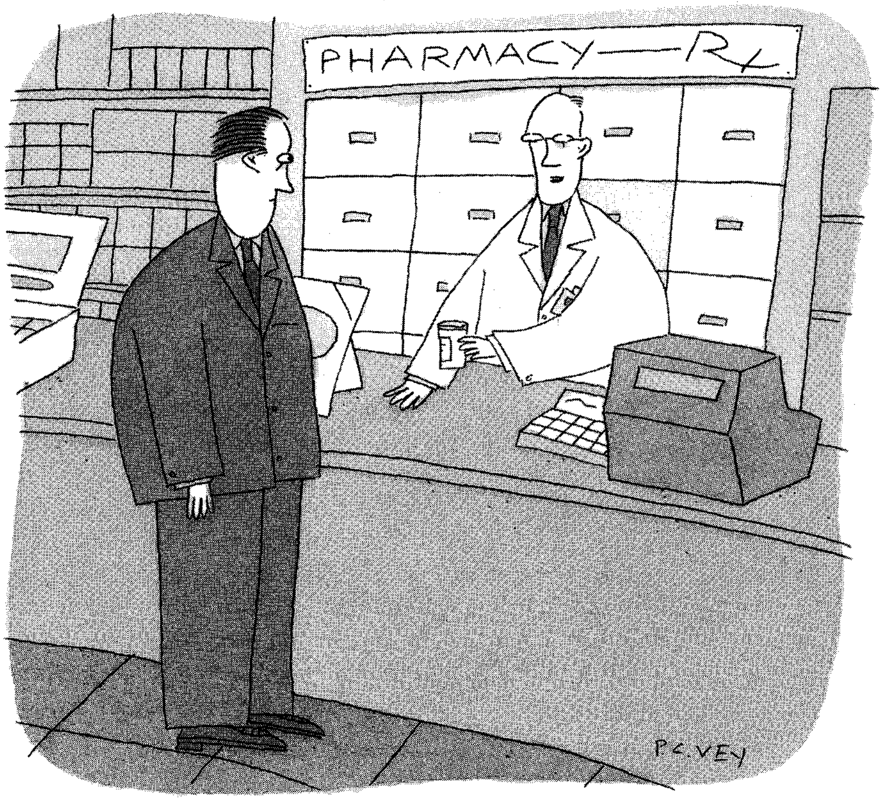
Is Lindsey Graham really a closet liberal? The sense of double-entendre that always faintly hovers over Graham's speech is almost palpable in this passage. "I'm not any kind of a bigot, I'm not," Alito said. Graham assured Alito that he believed him, not because of his good reputation but because of "the way you have lived your life and the way you and your wife are raising your children." Then Graham had the audacity to cite—not by name—the Abramoff scandal as an instance of the kind of guilt by association that Alito was being subjected to:

> We're going to go through a bit of this ourselves as congressmen and senators. People are going to take a fact that we got a campaign donation from somebody who's found to be a little different than we thought they were—and our political opponent's going to say, "Aha, I gotcha!" And we're going to say, "Wait a minute. I didn't know that. I didn't take the money for that reason." . . . We have photos taken with people—and sometimes you wish you didn't have your photo taken. But that doesn't mean that you're a bad person because of that association. Judge Alito, I am sorry that you've had to go through this. I am sorry that your family has had to sit here and listen to this.

It was at this moment that Mrs. Alito got up and left the hearing room to have her famous cry. The TV camera barely caught the image of her figure brushing past two seats, and the TV watcher would have attached no significance to the sight. Unlike the forbiddingly beautiful and elegant Mrs. Roberts—who sat motionless during her husband's hearing, with a look of intense, almost anxious concentration on her face—the buxom Mrs. Alito fidgeted and looked around and never seemed to be fully engaged by the proceedings. As it was later reported (around the globe), Mrs. Alito had been so upset by the bad things the Democrats had said about her husband, and so moved by Graham's defense, that she had to leave in tears. But to anyone who had observed Mrs. Alito's demeanor in the days before the incident, Charles Isherwood's comment in the *Times*—"Surely grinding boredom may also have played a part in her scene-stealing eruption and flight from the Senate chamber"—had the ring of truth.

The Alito hearings were indeed grindingly boring. Although subjects of the highest interest were introduced—spying on citizens, torture, abortion, the right to privacy, civil rights, discrimination, executive power—the talk was never interesting, since Alito could never be drawn. Like Roberts, he eluded the Democrats' attempts to pry his judicial philosophy out of him, but, unlike Roberts, he offered no compensatory repartee. He was always just a guy answering questions *very carefully*. Over and over, the Democrats quizzed Alito on his pro-police, pro-prosecution, and pro-employer opinions. (The legal scholar Cass Sunstein analyzed forty-five of Alito's dissents in cases where individual rights and institutions were in conflict and found that in thirty-eight of them Alito took the side of the institution.) And over and over—like an accountant patiently explaining why the figures on a tax return are correct—Alito spared no dry detail in justifying his reasoning.

As the hearings wore on, and the fight between the Democratic and Republican committee members took on heat, Alito became an almost peripheral figure. The charge that the Democrats were cruelly badgering Alito was in fact unfounded. They had been a lot tougher on Roberts. At one point in the Roberts hearing, Joe Biden pushed Roberts so hard—indeed, was so fresh to him—that Specter had to intervene and say, "Let him finish his answer, Joe." But, when questioning Alito, Joe practically tugged his forelock. "Presumptuous of me to say this," "You'd know better than I, Judge," "I don't mean to suggest I'm correcting you," "I'm not presuming to be as knowledgeable about this as you," "All I'm suggesting is," "You've been very gracious" are among the examples of Biden's nervous servility. (In the second round of questioning, in a gesture of propitiation that can only be called deranged, Biden put on a Princeton cap.) But the very idea of questioning Alito's probity left the Democrats open



"You'll enjoy the way these interact with over-the-counter medication."

to charges of bullying. Where the fair Roberts had been fair game, the mousy Alito was out of bounds. Why don't you pick on someone your own size? By the time the Democrats realized their tactical error, it was too late to correct it. That the judge who consistently rules against little guys should become the confirmation hearing's own little guy was one of the proceedings' more delicious (and, for the Democrats, bitterest) ironies.

On the Senate floor two weeks later, with Alito no longer there to drain their blood, the eight Democrats spoke their fears with forceful urgency. Kennedy, Leahy, Durbin, and Feinstein were especially eloquent, and Biden behaved himself. Over the days of debate, the flame of filibuster flickered and subsided, and the ten Republicans, smelling victory, showed the losers no mercy. Jeff Sessions, who had been one of the quieter presences in both the Roberts and the Alito hearings, now came to demonic life:

> It is almost amusing as we have gone through the committee process to see them grasp in desperation to find something to complain about with Judge Alito. None of them could agree on what they didn't like. They bounced all over the place mostly. It sounded like they didn't like President Bush. They were having grievances about Abu Ghraib prison, which President Bush had nothing to do with.

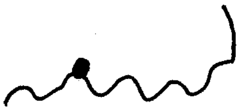
Sessions went on:

> They have been hankering for Harriet Miers, which is rather odd, I think. They have suggested somehow that some right-wing cabal caused President Bush to withdraw her nomination. . . . They have complained steadfastly that Judge Alito somehow is a tool of President Bush to defend his national policy and his war on terrorism and that Judge Alito is going to be a part of his efforts to arrogate powers to the executive branch. Who has been at President Bush's right arm for 5 years? It is Harriet Miers. . . . She has been involved in every one of these decisions about executive branch powers, National Security Agency wiretaps of Al Qaeda telephone conversations. She has been part of all of that. You think they would have let her come through here? They say: Oh we think she would be a fine nominee. What would they have done to her?

(Sessions had a point. The Democrats' tears for the martyred Harriet Miers had something of the crocodile quality of the Republicans' tears for Mrs. Alito's. The Democrats' outrage over Alito's dissent in the case of Doe v. Groody was similarly transparent. The case involved the warrantless strip search of a ten-year-old girl and her mother during a drug bust. Alito sided with the police, who argued that an affidavit gave them the authority to search the mother and daughter. The Democrats treated the incident as if it were the Rape of Nanking.) Other Republicans made other gloating speeches about the hapless Democrats, and, of course, none of it mattered because there would be no filibuster and Alito would be confirmed by the Republican majority in the Senate. John Kerry arrived exhausted from an economic conference in Davos to try to rally the minority troops. Sessions, apparently unaware of Kerry's return, jeered at the "international" filibuster "hatched in Davos, Switzerland, where Senator Kerry now is with those masters of the universe trying to figure out the world economy. Maybe they ought to spend more time trying to get the oil prices down than worrying about conjuring up a filibuster of a judge as able as Judge Alito."

When it was Biden's turn to speak, he quoted a remark that Alito had made during the hearing that he had not been alone in finding striking. Biden had been questioning the nominee about his position in a case involving the Family and Medical Leave Act, and had asked whether he and his fellow-judges on the panel had taken into consideration the fact that pregnant women sometimes need leave for bed rest during the last two months of pregnancy. Alito replied that, no, they had not considered that, and added, "We can't know everything about the real world." The remark leaped out of the gray blur of Alito's technocratic speech like a confession that can no longer be withheld. It confirmed what we already felt we knew about this dour and oddly innocent man.

Perhaps nowhere is the sense of Alito's alienation more palpable than in his dissent in Riley v. Taylor (2001), the case of a black man who was convicted of murder (and condemned to die) by an all-white jury, and who had appealed the verdict on the ground of discrimination. The appeals court, ruling en banc, accepted the possibility of discrimination and reversed the conviction. But Alito couldn't see what the majority saw. He argued that his colleagues had been wrong to be influenced by the fact that within a year three other murder cases in the county had been tried by all-white juries. He wrote:



> "An amateur with a pocket calculator," the majority writes, can calculate that "there is little chance of randomly selecting four consecutive all-white juries." Statistics can be very revealing—and also terribly misleading in the hands of "an amateur with a pocket calculator." The majority's simplistic analysis treats the prospective jurors who were peremptorily challenged as if they had no relevant characteristics other than race, as if they were in effect black and white marbles in a jar from which the lawyers drew. In reality, however, these individuals had many other characteristics, and without taking those variables into account, it is simply not possible to determine whether the prosecution's strikes were based on race or something else.
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> The dangers in the majority's approach can be easily illustrated. Suppose we asked our "amateur with a pocket calculator" whether the American people take right- or left-handedness into account in choosing their Presidents. Although only about 10% of the population is left-handed, left-handers have won five of the last six presidential elections. Our "amateur with a calculator" would conclude that "there is little chance of randomly selecting" left-handers in five out of six presidential elections. But does it follow that the voters cast their ballots based on whether a candidate was right- or left-handed?

Judge Dolores K. Sloviter, the author of the majority opinion, dryly replied to Alito, "The dissent has overlooked the obvious fact that there is no provision in the Constitution that protects persons from discrimination based on whether they are right-handed or left-handed. To suggest any comparability to the striking of jurors based on their race is to minimize the history of discrimination against prospective black jurors and black defendants."

The facts that Alito overlooks are, of course, facts that his fellow right-wing ideologues also can't see from the mysterious planet—even farther away than Davos, Switzerland—they inhabit. During the Roberts and the Alito hearings, it was almost amusing to hear the nominees ritually denounce discredited Supreme Court decisions, such as Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), which refused a Creole named Homer Plessy the right to sit where he wanted on a train, and established the separate-but-equal doctrine; and Korematsu v. U.S., which countenanced the internment of Americans of Japanese descent during the Second World War. Is there any reason to think that, had he been on the Court when these cases came before it, Alito or Roberts would have opposed the majority? Roberts was much given to affirming his fealty to "the rule of law." He said, "Somebody asked me . . . 'Are you going to be on the side of the little guy?' And you obviously want to give an immediate answer, but, as you reflect on it, if the Constitution says that the little guy should win, the little guy's going to win in court before me. But if the Constitution says that the big guy should win, well, then the big guy's going to win, because my obligation is to the Constitution." The cases that are the glory of Supreme Court history are the cases where the little guy won; the cases that are its shame are those where he lost. The Constitution doesn't say who should win. Nine people do.

DUE TUESDAY
BENJAMIN F

"Mrs. Briner? Remember all that stuff I said I did on my summer vacation? I didn't."

3

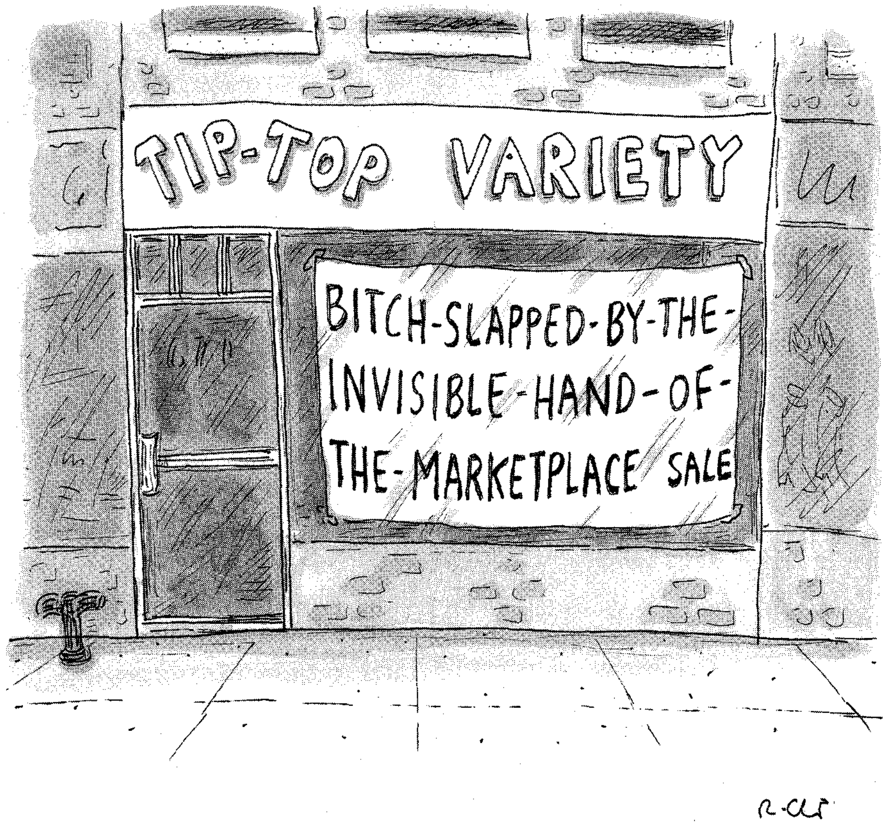
Another memorable passage in the David Souter confirmation hearings occurred while he was being questioned by the Democratic senator from Ohio, Howard Metzenbaum. Metzenbaum asked Souter, as fifteen years later Feinstein asked Roberts, to give a personal rather than a legal response to a question about a controversial issue—abortion, in this case. Metzenbaum described in gruesome detail cases of illegal abortion from the pre-Roe era, and then said, "My real question to you isn't how you will rule on Roe v. Wade . . . but what does a woman face, when she has an unwanted pregnancy, a pregnancy that may be the result of rape or incest or failed contraceptives or ignorance of basic health information? And I would just like to get your own view and your own thoughts of that woman's position under those circumstances."

Souter paused before replying. Then he said, "Senator, your question comes as a surprise to me. I wasn't expecting that kind of question, and you have made me think of something that I have not thought of for twenty-four years." Souter went on to tell a story from his days at Harvard Law School. He had an appointment as a resident proctor (a student adviser) in a Harvard College freshman dormitory, and one day a student came to him for counsel. "He was in pretty rough emotional shape," Souter recalled,

> and we shut the door and sat down, and he told me that his girlfriend was pregnant and he said, "She's about to try to have a self-abortion and she doesn't know how to do it." He said, "She's afraid to tell her parents what has happened and she's afraid to go to the health services," and he said "Will you talk to her?" and I did. . . . I will not try to say what I told her. But I spent two hours in a small dormitory bedroom that afternoon, in that room because that was the most private place we could get . . . listening to her and trying to counsel her to approach her problem in a way different from what she was doing, and your question has brought that back to me, and I think the only thing I can add to that is I know what you were trying to tell me, because I remember that afternoon.

As Souter spoke—gravely and slowly (but not too slowly), with his strong New England accent (he said "lore" for "law" and "sore" for "saw" and "floor" for "flaw")—one had the feeling of lights dimming on a set. One of the characters would soon get up to draw the curtains and turn on a lamp. This was not the only time in the Souter hearing that one felt as if one were seeing a well-wrought play rather than witnessing a piece of left-to-chance reality. In his opening statement, Souter told the senators that he was looking forward to "our dialogue," and dialogue did indeed take place—often very gripping dialogue. As Alito had unnerved, you could almost say unmanned, his questioners, so Souter gave his interlocutors to know that this was a play in which all the roles had good lines. If Souter—a slight man (his thinness had a mildly ascetic cast) of enormous, subtle intelligence and a moving absence of self-regard—was the star turn, he permitted the supporting cast of senators to perform no less brilliantly. Watching tapes of the Souter hearings makes one feel how things have deteriorated.

But not so fast. When the stately Shavian drama of the questioning of Souter ended, a new and entirely different drama began. The furies arrived. Molly Yard, the president of NOW, Fay Wattleton, of Planned Parenthood, Eleanor Smeal, of the Fund for the Feminist Majority, Kate Michelman, the executive director of NARAL, and Elizabeth Holtzman, the New York City comptroller, testified against Souter with fierce disdain. They assumed (as Michelman assumed about Alito when she testified against his confirmation in January) that Souter would



cast a decisive vote to overturn Roe v. Wade. "I tremble for this country if you confirm David Souter," said Molly Yard. "Women's lives are literally on the line." She sneered at Souter's account of the scene in the freshman dorm: "This shows empathy? How do we know but what he may have cold-bloodedly told her she would be a murderer if she ended her pregnancy?"

Souter's record on civil rights, voting rights, gay rights, and victim rights and his bias toward law enforcement was similarly mocked and denounced by the feminists. Had these angry witnesses been able to see into the future, would they have testified as they did? Of course not. And had I *not* known how things turned out with Souter would I have watched the tape of his confirmation hearing with the same charmed delight? Of course not. We read what we can into reality's impassive face. Alan Simpson, a prescient pro-choice Republican senator from Wyoming, said to Michelman and Wattleton, "I really believe you are making a big mistake on this one. . . . These things are going to come up again. There are going to be other Supreme Court choices when you are really going to need to be in the trenches. This is not one of those cases." He went on to say that Souter was "bright, intelligent, studious, caring, chivalrous, patient, probative, civilized, and a great listener and if that ain't enough for you, I think you are making a real mistake." "I think we have a difference of opinion," Wattleton said. After the furies left, a little parade of law-enforcement officials went by who said that when Souter was attorney general of New Hampshire he had shown the police unfailing courtesy and kindness.

Then came another twist of the plot. Howard Phillips, the chairman of an organization called the Conservative Caucus, took the stand and compared Souter to Adolf Eichmann. After Souter performed his aria of the freshman dorm, Metzenbaum had said that's nice, it shows "you have empathy for the problem." But was there any reason to think that Souter could empathize with *both* sides of the abortion debate? His record showed strong anti-abortion leanings. Was there anything he could show on the "other" side? To which Souter replied that he was a trustee of a hospital in Concord where abortions were performed. Now Phillips accused Souter of being "an accomplice" to "the shedding of innocent blood." "I would say that there is a fundamental distinction between the position of the groups such as NOW and NARAL and Planned Parenthood and so forth which urge a 'no' vote on Judge Souter," Phillips said. "Their position is that they are not absolutely certain that Judge Souter is going to be with them to their satisfaction. I, on the other hand, am absolutely certain on the basis of the record that Justice Souter does have a permissive view toward abortion." (Phillips went on to say that he was "troubled by his answers to other questions," above all by "one he gave to Senator Thurmond at the very beginning of the hearings, when he said that the power of the law comes from the people. I don't believe that. I believe it comes from God.")

After the debacle of the Alito hearing, Joseph Biden said that confirmation hearings should be abolished. (During the Roberts hearing, he had already remarked, "These hearings have become sort of a Kabuki dance" and "I am moving to the view that I'm not sure these hearings are the proper way to determine how to vote for a judge.") Biden is not the first to make such a proposal. In 1988, in response to the noisy Bork hearings, a Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Judicial Selection recommended that the confirmation process be restored to a quieter former mode, whereby the nominee was judged solely on his written record and on the testimony of legal experts. These recommendations were ignored, as we know. As John Anthony Maltese points out, they were posited on the dubious idea of

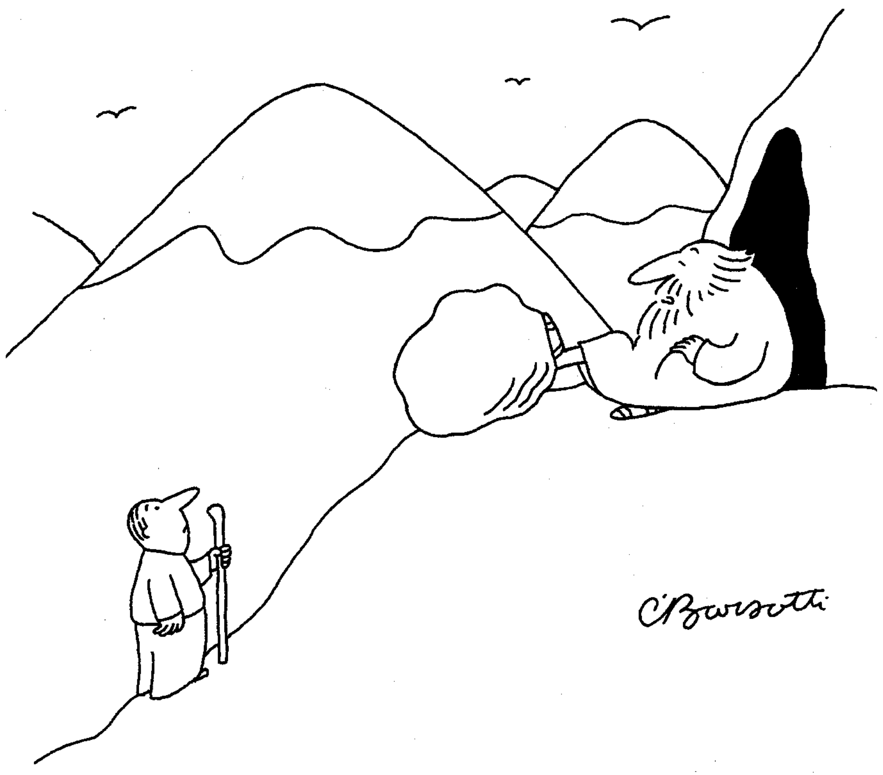
> a golden age when Supreme Court nominees were not required to testify, when the factious whims of public opinion were ignored by senators, when the legal qualifications of nominees were considered without the taint of political motivation, and when senators deliberated behind closed doors rather than posturing in the glare of television lights. The problem is that the apolitical nature of that golden age is largely fictitious.

Maltese's book is devoted to the political fights by which Supreme Court nominations are by their very nature dogged. Another book could be written about Supreme Court nominations since television lights first glared at them, in 1981, when Sandra Day O'Connor appeared before the Judiciary Committee. The televised hearings have not been uniformly edifying—the Alito hearing may be the least instructive of the lot—but each has its atmosphere and, so to speak, plot. The hearing for the nomination of Ruth Bader Ginsburg had the atmosphere of a garden party held to fête a beloved aunt about to embark on a wonderful journey. Ted Kennedy, who usually sits at confirmation hearings looking as if he had a toothache, was charming and funny. The Republicans were polite and deferential. During the recent hearings, the Republicans repeatedly boasted of their gracious acceptance of Ginsburg in contrast to the Democrats' sulky resistance to Roberts and Alito. Lindsey Graham was particularly mordant in his description of Ginsburg as an A.C.L.U. Commie whom, nevertheless, the Republicans manfully swallowed because Clinton had won the election. So why don't the Democrats manfully swallow Bush's appointees? Why are they being such poor sports? "Elections matter," Graham said. As the Democrats might have retorted—but didn't think or know to do until Senate debate on Alito was under way—Ginsburg had not been thrust on the Republicans the way Roberts and Alito had been thrust on the Democrats. She had been pre-approved by Orrin Hatch. Hatch recalls the circumstances in his book "Square Peg: Confessions of a Citizen Senator." He writes that when Byron White resigned from the Court, Bill Clinton called him to ask how his Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, would go over as a nominee. Hatch, then chairman of the Judiciary Committee, told Clinton that Babbitt was too liberal and would be hard to confirm, and gave him two names as alternatives: Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer. (In a footnote, Hatch writes that Ginsburg's record as a federal-appeals-court judge was "very similar to that of another subsequent Supreme Court Justice, Antonin Scalia.")

The Thomas hearings, in contrast, with their incredible final act, had a dark character—though it wasn't until Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson published their tour de force of reporting, "Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas," that we understood just how dark. Thomas's "high-tech lynching" speech, in which he denied Anita Hill's accusations with moving vehemence, was one of the great performances of its time. But Mayer and Abramson's research—their interviews with confidants of Hill who corroborated her account and with schoolmates of Thomas who recalled his crude sexual humor and regular attendance at pornographic movies—makes it all but impossible to believe that the zealot who sits in Thurgood Marshall's place on the high court didn't say those crassly dirty things to Anita Hill. Even more disturbing is the book's account of how the far right, the lesson of Bork fresh in its memory, stopped at nothing to get this nominee on the Court.

Since Bork, nominees have played their cards close to their chests. Bork could conceivably have saved his nomination by not constantly showing his losing hand, but more likely the combination of powerful organized opposition on the left and the Democratic majority in the Senate was always enough to defeat it. By the time of Thomas, the right had mobilized, and has never again failed a stricken nominee. The so-I-lied convention, established by Thomas (who told the senators that he believed in a constitutional right to privacy and when safely on the Court said that, well, actually, he didn't), along with the mantra of "If I talk about recent Supreme Court cases, the sky will fall," has been firmly in place since the Thomas hearing. Biden's misgivings about the hearings are justified: when they are over we know no more about the nominee's judicial philosophy than we did before they started. But they yield another kind of knowledge: a portrait of the nominee emerges from them that may be as telling as any articulation of his judicial philosophy. When Alan Simpson asked David Souter whether he would be able to remove his personal feelings from his judgments, Souter said, "We always ask, we constantly ask ourselves, Senator, whether we can do that. We have no guarantee of success, but we know that the best chance of success comes from being conscious of the fact that we will be tempted to do otherwise." Neither Alito nor Roberts showed himself capable of such fineness of mind. In the light of Souter's testimony before the Judiciary Committee, his opinions on the high court should not have been surprising. And, in the light of theirs, Roberts's and Alito's probably will not be, either.

Biden also left out what may be the most compelling reason of all for the continued life of confirmation hearings: the intimate glimpse they give us of eighteen of our legislators. Which ones we love and which ones we hate is determined by our partisanship, of course. But as we watch them playing their big-league game we may sometimes forget to root, and just sit transfixed by their remarkable athleticism. ♦

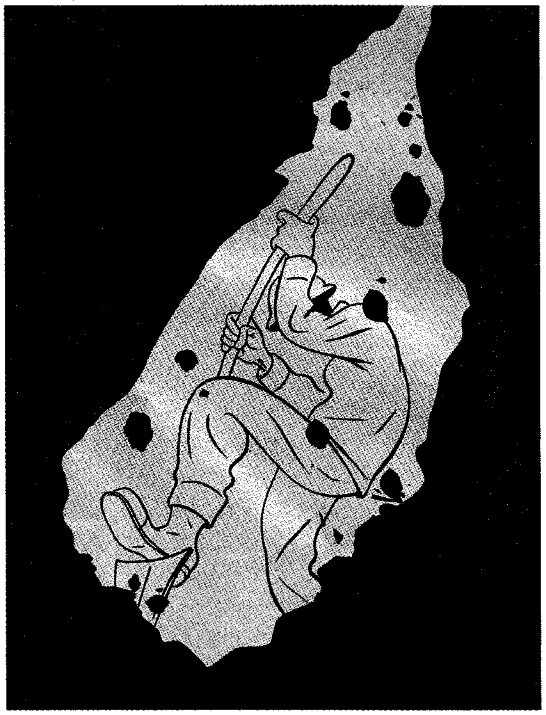


"I'm counting to three, pilgrim."

FICTION

THE TRENCH

BY ERRI DE LUCA



ZOHAR LAZAR

When I found the sewage pipe I was happy, but I couldn't smile. Too many days of danger had hardened my nerves. With the pick, I made a hole in the top part of the drain, and inhaled the stink like the perfume of victory. I hadn't gone crazy; on the contrary, I'd been saved.

We had begun digging many days before. The excavation had started at the house, crossed a garden, and reached the street, blocking half of it. Down below that street, at what depth we didn't know, we had been told we would find the main sewage pipe. At first, there were a lot of us; then, when the hole went deeper than a man standing, only two of us remained. The trench was three feet wide, the minimum width you needed to turn around in, and at the point where I reached the sewage pipe its floor was twenty feet below the ground. We had to run a conduit from the house to the pipe.

The two of us dug in that narrow trench for several days, each day darker than the one before. We put the dirt in containers that were hoisted up from above with a pulley. We entered at dawn; we came out for the midday break, then again at five. Even those who don't do this kind of work know that a trench like that should be reinforced on both sides, with vertical beams wedged in by perpendicular struts. Otherwise, there's the risk of collapse. But our boss didn't want to bother with all that. So the two of us dug, face to face, knowing that we were caught in one hell of a trap. Who were we and why had we accepted this risk?

One of us was an Algerian, forty years old, a sober man of few words. He was the last to be hired at the building site, and he knew that he couldn't refuse the task: he'd be fired. That he needed the work goes without saying; he had just arrived in Paris, he spoke little French, this was his first job in France. The other man was me, a thirty-two-year-old Italian laborer, hired a few months earlier and not much liked by the French boss. I was one of the first to arrive in the morning, but I was one of the first to leave at night, too. No whistle blew; the workers had to watch the clock for themselves, and this meant that they never stopped exactly on time—they were all afraid of appearing insufficiently attached to their jobs. So they ended up putting in unpaid hours for an employer who was expert at tricks of this sort. I left exactly at five—plus, I wouldn't do overtime on non-work days. This must have hampered the boss's flexibility. I was not flexible; in fact, I was rigid, hardened in my muscles and in my sleep. So the roughest, dirtiest jobs were deliberately assigned to me. I was the only white-skinned worker who would do them.

At midday, between mouthfuls of highly spiced watery soup, we talked for a while in our rudimentary common French, then each returned to his own thoughts in his mother tongue. The other workers called me "Italy," but I didn't feel that I belonged to a particular nation. I didn't support the colors of a jersey or a specific shade of skin, not even my own. I accepted the nickname. "Italy" worked hard and didn't try to take anyone else's place, because no one wanted his place. I needed the job. I had found it with difficulty after weeks of pounding pavements on the outskirts of Paris. I had got it, and I wanted to hold on to it, and no damn boss was going to stop me. If he wanted an excuse to get rid of me I wasn't going to give him one—I would descend to the depths of hell, but I wouldn't retreat.

That was why, for those few days, two men who didn't know each other and couldn't even have addressed each other by name stood face to face in a trench, risking their lives in search of a sewage pipe. With every foot we advanced, the sky narrowed; soon it was just a strip the size of the hole we were standing in. With every foot we advanced, we were waiting for that trench to collapse on us, burying us alive.

The other workers no longer greeted us in the morning; they went off silently to their jobs. At midday, someone would usually offer us something to drink. I always refused; a mute anger had grown in me, a fury under the skin that allowed me to endure the hours down in the hole. How long did this last? Not that long—a dozen days. At the end of the first week the man who was with me started to crack. In the darkness, illuminated by our lamp—it was dark down there even at midday—his round black eyes stared, his face dripped sweat; he muttered his automatic invocation, which I can still hear if I block my ears. "*Trouvé? Tu l'as trouvé?*": the hoarse voice of a lost man, the common exhalation of the trenches of that century. "No, I haven't found it yet, but it must be close. Ask for someone else to take over from you, friend. The boss isn't mad at you—you've done your part." I told him this, and then he was silent; he said no more. He had asked the other Algerian workers already, but no one was willing to go down there. So I assured him that if the trench was going to collapse it would do so only at night, when the damp came. I invented rational explanations, and he sort of believed me; I was educated.

The truth was, the trench wouldn't collapse; he hadn't crossed the sea only to end up buried with a man from Naples—we would die on the ocean, in the mountains, but not here. This I didn't say to him: one shouldn't speak of death with one's feet in a grave. I was trying to calm his fear, but I did it for myself as well, because I needed him—with two of us, the job would be done sooner. If he broke down, if he got himself fired, I would have to finish digging by myself, it would take me longer, and the risk would be greater. But why should a man have to suffer this way? Why in the world should a human being have to earn bread for his children with a noose around his neck? For me it was a question of pride, but for him it was only bread, and still he had to soak it in that salty water of ours, which tasted so much like tears.

Then I decided that he was no help to me—I would manage better on my own. So during the lunch break one day I went to the boss, who looked at me combatively, ready to tell me that this was the job, and, if I didn't want to do it, here was the door. I had already heard him say as much to others. In front of the other workers, I told him that you couldn't turn around in the trench anymore, that it was impossible for two men to continue to work down there, and that by now we had to be close to the sewer. I asked him to let me finish the job alone. He looked down at his plate and nodded his head.

So after the lunch break I went alone into the trench. For the first time in days I felt calm; without the other man there I was relieved. Now I wasn't just using the pick, I had to shovel, too. It might take longer but at least I wouldn't have those eyes on me, I wouldn't have to hear that whisper ("*Trouvé? Tu l'as trouvé?*"), or see all that human matter dripping with sweat and shame and, against its will, begging a stranger for salvation. This I understand now, as I recall those days for the first time. Back then it occurred to me only that I didn't need him, that I didn't need anyone to help me find that damn sewer. Without his pain, I felt lighter. But I still couldn't find the drain.

Days passed this way; the sky on August mornings in France was brilliant. From the bottom of the trench it looked like a canal. I didn't sweat much; it was cool down there. Every so often someone would lean over the edge of the hole and ask, "Everything O.K.?" I invariably answered, "It's a vacation." If a truck passed on the street, dirt fell from the walls of the trench. It was as if the trench were perspiring, stretching its muscles so as not to collapse: it sweated earth. It's on my side, I thought. At times, even a difficult job isn't enough to keep your brain quiet, and a person alone in a ditch for eight hours a day has a lot of time to make up tall tales and stories for himself. It seemed to me—I admit it—as if the hole had a body and a will; for example, it had the affectionate desire not to end up on top of me.

On one of those days somebody, as a joke, tossed into the hole a primitive cross, two pieces of wood tied together at right angles with a rope. It landed near my pick. I felt an impulse to rush to the surface and pursue whoever wanted to play undertaker with me. A dead man rising, with the cross in his hands, to chase his own funeral procession: then I smiled.

When finally I sank the pick into the earth and the iron rebounded from the top of the sewage pipe with a thunderclap, I was happy. But by that time I couldn't smile: nerves had bound the muscles of my face as tight as string around a roast in the oven. I wanted to shout, but no sound came out. With the shovel I cleared the area and with a blow of the pick I pierced the vault on which, at last, my feet were standing. Has anyone ever been happy to smell shit? I was, and I swelled with fierce pride, thus mixing with that natural odor the unnatural stench of all the garbage I had carried inside me for those two weeks. Shit on shit: it must have been a tie between me and that sewer, in the contest to see which of us held more. I don't want to speak ill of myself. When one is in a tight spot in life, one uses whatever one can to get out, without questioning where it comes from. My proud thoughts had served to keep me down in that trench without asking for relief. They had rendered me a service, but at the same time they were shit thoughts. I was happy to have won the fight with that brute of a boss who wouldn't have paid a penny for the death of a workman buried in a collapsed ditch.

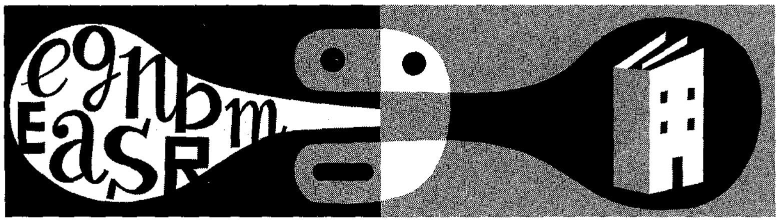
I came out early that day, and everyone asked me anxiously if I had found the pipe, afraid that I had finally decided to give up. I answered by bringing two fingers to my nose as if to hold it closed. Is the vacation over? they asked. They were happy that I had succeeded. They all knew that they had tolerated the possibility that one of their own would die without their doing anything to prevent it. But the only way they could have done something for me was either by risking their own precarious jobs or by taking my place: one cannot ask a man to leave the rank and file and raise his voice or his cross. Still, a man who appreciates in another a gesture that he has had to repress can later become his friend. That day, all the workers left together exactly at five. At five o'clock, there was no one left at the site. I smile in sympathy now; then I hardly noticed.

It took a week to make the hookup. The specialized workers demanded that the entire trench be reinforced according to regulations. The boss was beside himself because of the time it would cost him. He pointed at me to show that there was no danger, and even dared, he was so furious, to ask me in their presence if any earth had fallen from the walls while I was down there, hoping for my complicity. "Like hail" was my response.

Perhaps in all our lives there comes a day when we are happy to smell shit. I know that I've behaved badly in my life, that I've risked my life out of pride and anger, and whatever else may lie in a man's heart. Although my presence has since been requested at the table of many languages, and numerous people have invited me to sit beside them, I wish for no one else to have to do as I did, hacking at my own grave with a pick, in the hope that it was not yet ready for me. ♦

(*Translated, from the Italian, by Ann Goldstein.*)

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

THE TERROR LAST TIME

What happened at Haymarket.

BY CALEB CRAIN

In William Dean Howells's 1890 novel "A Hazard of New Fortunes," an old German socialist named Lindau rails against capitalism so bitterly that he upsets a friend. Lindau apologizes, saying that his bark is worse than his bite—or, in Howells's rendition of his thick German accent, "My parg is worse than my pidte." At the time Howells was writing, however, many Americans had come to believe that a bark, if sharp enough, was tantamount to a bite. In his opinion, this confusion of word and deed had caused innocent men in Chicago to be hanged.

On May 4, 1886, several anarchists had addressed a crowd in the Haymarket, a square in Chicago two blocks long where farmers sold produce. When nearly a hundred and eighty policemen arrived to break up the rally, someone threw a bomb, and the police opened fire. At least seven patrolmen died, and at least four civilians. Over the next few weeks, the authorities rounded up and detained hundreds of the city's anarchists. Eight men were put on trial for murder, the most prominent of whom were Albert Parsons and August Spies (pronounced "Spees"). Parsons led the city's English-speaking anarchists, and Spies the German-speaking ones. Aside from Parsons and a teamster named Samuel Fielden, the defendants were of German ethnicity: Michael Schwab had assisted Spies in editing the movement's German-language newspapers; George Engel and Adolph Fischer had belonged to a militant cell; Louis Lingg, a wild young man, had dabbled in bomb-making; and Oscar Neebe, a yeast-maker, had served on a few anarchist committees.

The prosecution never proved that any of the eight had planned, committed, or even known in advance about the Haymarket bombing. Instead, it relied on their words. All of them had praised violence in the cause of socioeconomic justice. "If we would achieve our liberation," Parsons had told a crowd of protesters in April of 1885, "every man must lay by a part of his wages, buy a Colt's navy revolver, a Winchester rifle, and learn how to make and use dynamite." The prosecution argued that anarchism itself constituted a conspiracy to commit murder, and the jurors agreed, sentencing all but one of the defendants to death. The person who actually threw the bomb was never identified.

William Morris, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and Friedrich Engels signed petitions on behalf of the condemned, but Howells was virtually the only American writer to do so. "For many weeks, for months, it has not been for one hour out of my waking thoughts," he wrote. "It blackens my life." The newspapers mocked him for caring—over one of his heartfelt letters, the Chicago *Tribune* printed the snide headline "MR. HOWELLS IS DISTRESSED"—and called the anarchists Europe's "scum and offal"; they were hyenas, wolves, vipers, savages, cutthroats, and fiends. One student of the Haymarket affair has called it "the first major 'red-scare' in American history."

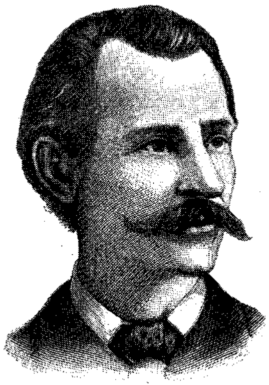
In November, 1887, Parsons, Spies, Engel, and Fischer were hanged. Howells began "A Hazard of New Fortunes" and poured into it his disillusionment and anger. Toward the end of the book, a policeman clubs Lindau for heckling. At the same moment, a bullet strikes an innocent bystander, who examines, as his last sight on earth, this policeman's face. "It was not bad, not cruel," the dying man sees. "It was like the face of a statue, fixed, perdurable, a mere image of irresponsible and involuntary authority."

Perhaps Howells had in mind the statue that commemorated the Haymarket affair, a bronze policeman raising his right arm as if to calm a crowd. Chicago's leading businessmen erected it in 1889, while *Harper's Weekly* was serializing "A Hazard of New Fortunes." By coincidence, in an anarchist parade a few years before, a float had carried an effigy of a policeman in the same pose, but with a club in its right hand, as if it were about to strike—as if gesture were about to become act.

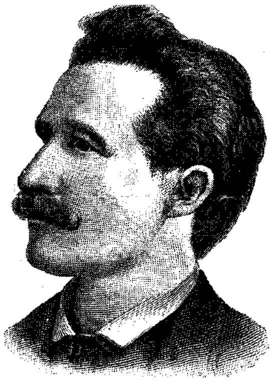
For the generation that came of age during the Civil War, ideals and violence were closely entangled. In fact, the war was a point of reference for almost every aspect of the anarchists' case, according to "Death in the Haymarket" (Pantheon; $26.95), a fast-paced new account by James Green, a labor historian. The bombing was "the biggest news story since Lincoln's assassination," Green writes. Since it took place in May, Green thinks it would have brought to mind the procession of Lincoln's funeral through Chicago during the same month twenty-one years earlier—the last time the city had stood united.

By 1886, that unity had fractured. Free labor was supposed to have triumphed in the Civil War, but as industry consolidated its power in the Reconstruction era, some laborers began to wonder. Craft was giving way to the assembly line, corporations were growing more powerful, and workers who tried to unionize were blacklisted. Perhaps the next civil war would pit capital against labor; in the meantime, the establishment and the anarchists fought over the memory of the last one. The anarchists venerated John Brown, the visionary terrorist who had attempted to launch a

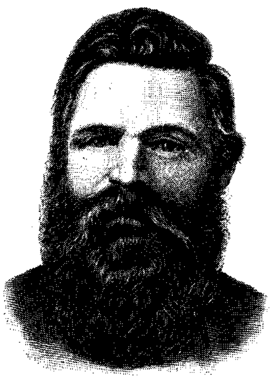
CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM; CORBIS (POSTER)



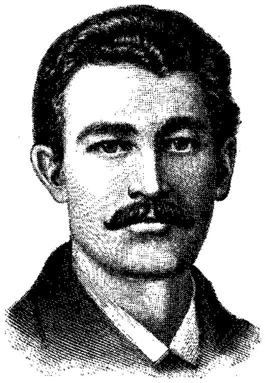
A. R. PARSONS.



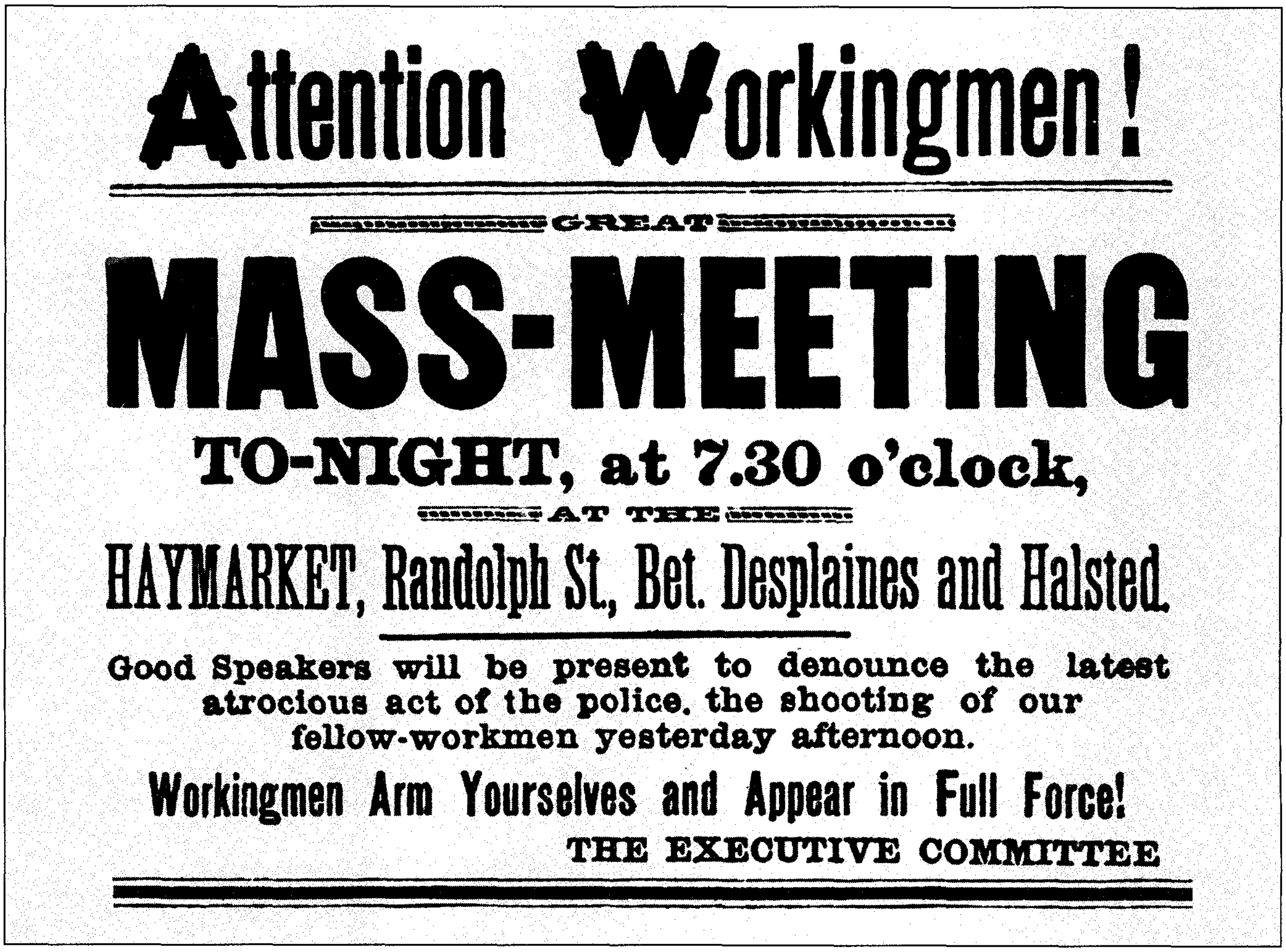
AUGUST SPIES.



SAMUEL FIELDEN.



LOUIS LINGG.



Attention Workingmen!

GREAT

MASS-MEETING

TO-NIGHT, at 7.30 o'clock,

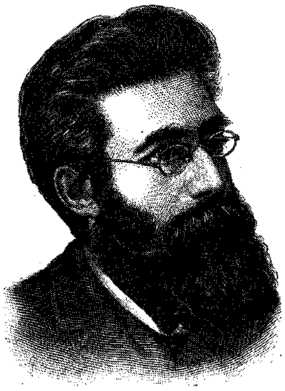
AT THE

HAYMARKET, Randolph St, Bet. Desplaines and Halsted.

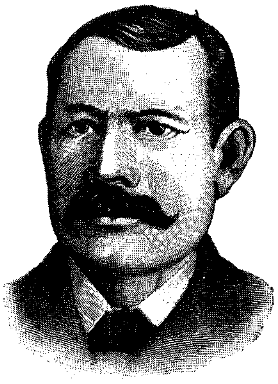
Good Speakers will be present to denounce the latest atrocious act of the police, the shooting of our fellow-workmen yesterday afternoon.

Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force!

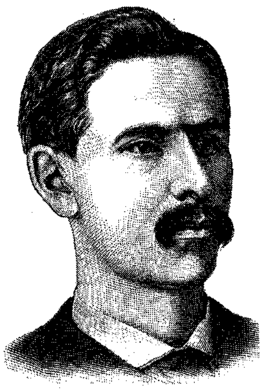
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



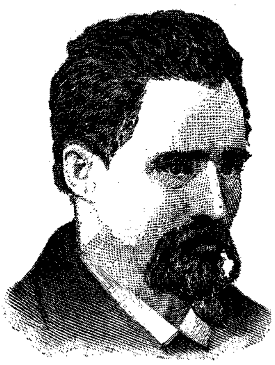
MICHAEL SCHWAB.



GEORGE ENGEL.



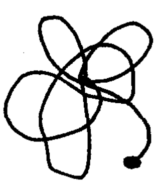
ADOLPH FISCHER.



OSCAR NEEBE.

The prosecution at the Haymarket trial expected the death penalty for only four of the eight accused. The jury wanted to hang seven.

slave revolt, and Brown's eldest son sent a box of Catawba grapes to each of them in prison. A lawyer for the defense argued that if the anarchists deserved to hang for their violent words, then abolitionists like Emerson and Thoreau should have been executed in the eighteen-fifties. On the other side, Lincoln's eldest son thought their crimes unforgivable, and the lead prosecutor opened the trial by likening them to secessionists: "The firing upon Fort Sumter . . . was nothing compared with this insidious, infamous plot," he claimed.



To add to the confusion over the war's legacy, Albert Parsons had fought on the side of the Confederacy. He was only thirteen at the time and had grown up in Texas. When the war was over, his politics shifted. In Waco, after learning to set type, he started a weekly paper that advocated respect for the civil rights of African-Americans, and he gave speeches encouraging them to vote. In 1869, he met a young woman named Lucy, who claimed to be the daughter of a Creek and a Mexican but was probably a former slave. In 1872, they married, or said they did. Texas outlawed interracial unions, and their marriage certificate has never been found.

"Anarchists don't marry," sneers a cynical diplomat in Joseph Conrad's novel "The Secret Agent." "They can't. It would be apostasy." But real life doesn't always conform to fiction; Parsons called Lucy "that grandest, noblest, bravest of women," and a friend wrote that "probably no married life had ever been less clouded." After the couple moved north, in 1873, Chicago newspapers reported that the "very determined-looking negress" marched beside her husband in parades and attended rallies with their two "anarchist sucklings."

Parsons continued his political education in the burgeoning capitalist stronghold of Chicago. Green estimates that Chicago's industrial production grew in the eighteen-eighties by a factor of twenty-one. The city excelled in the production of iron, steel, men's clothing, and farm machinery, and its meatpacking industry perfected "the mechanized animal kill," in Green's vivid phrase. Along the way, Chicago also became the nation's leading producer of anarchists.

Parsons and the other defendants at the Haymarket trial belonged to an organization called the International Working People's Association, or I.W.P.A. They never settled on a name for their ideology, however. Depending on the date and the speaker, it was called anarchism, socialism, communism, or some combination of the terms. "In their bottling of the social panacea, the social-revolutionaries were extremely careless both with label and ingredients," Henry David observed in his groundbreaking 1936 study, "The History of the Haymarket Affair." It was also unclear exactly how the utopia they hoped for was going to arrive. At first Parsons believed in elections. He ran unsuccessfully for alderman, state assemblyman, sheriff, and county clerk, and in 1879 the Socialistic Labor Party even nominated him for President. Then, in the spring of 1880, Chicago election officials stuffed ballot boxes and forged tally sheets in order to unseat a socialist alderman. The fraud failed, but Parsons and others lost faith in representative democracy. In 1881, a congress of revolutionaries condemned voting as "an invention of the bourgeoisie to fool the workers."

According to another plan, later known as the "Chicago idea," labor unions were going to seed the revolution. But strict socialists feared that unions were compromised by the bargains they struck with capitalists, and even proponents of the Chicago idea did not wish for unions to seize political power. "Government is for slaves," Parsons wrote. "Free men govern themselves."

The utopia of the anarchists approximated a religious idea. "Anarchy is simply a human effort to bring about the millennium," a sympathizer explained. As with the Christian millennium, it was wrong to try to precipitate it. You couldn't, even if you wanted to. At the Haymarket trial, a witness testified that when George Engel first heard about the bombing he delivered a little sermon on exactly this doctrinal point: "Engel said whoever threw that bomb did a foolish thing. . . . He said the policemen were just as good people; the revolution must grow out of the people, then the police and militia would throw away their arms and go with the people." When the time was ripe, revolution would be inexorable, but no one could foretell the hour of its coming.

In the meantime, anarchism was to be "a guide to everyday life," as the late Paul Avrich explained in his definitive 1984 study, "The Haymarket Tragedy." (Just as Henry David had combed through every scrap of newsprint about the Haymarket affair, so Avrich combed through every scrap of manuscript. Although Green's telling is jauntier, their research remains unsurpassed.) By design, the I.W.P.A. had no executive branch, and as much as possible was left to the individual. In Henry James's "The Princess Casamassima," published the same year as the Haymarket bombing, the anarchists have a Master, and the fey young bookbinder Hyacinth Robinson gets a dark thrill out of imagining himself no more than a key on a piano, which "would grow generally audible (with a small, sharp crack) for a second" under the Master's playing. The real anarchists of Chicago, by contrast, would have been wary of mortgaging their liberty to another person.

Living anarchism day to day, the revolutionaries created what Green calls "an alternative intellectual and moral world." There were socialist lectures for adults and socialist Sunday schools for children, and also socialist picnics, polkas, choruses, and saloons. Drama clubs produced such plays as "The Proletarian's Daughter." Every spring, the anniversary of the Paris Commune was celebrated in gymnasiums festooned with scarlet banners. Parsons edited an English-language newspaper, the *Alarm*, which wobbled between weekly and fortnightly, for economic reasons. The city also had a Czech anarchist newspaper, *Budoucnost*, and a trio of German ones: the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* came out every weekday, the *Vorbote* on Saturday, and the *Fackel* on Sunday.

The German papers owed their success to two factors. First, there were a lot of Germans in Chicago to read them. Avrich guesses that not long after Bismarck's Germany passed an anti-socialist law, in 1878, there were more German anarchists in America than in Germany. Second, all three papers were in the hands of August Spies, a radicalized upholsterer with blue eyes and a lush, curling mustache, who spoke three languages, honed his physique at the gym, and had a reputation as a ladies' man. Spies wrote fiery editorials in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, and his colleague Schwab, a scholarly-looking bookbinder, reported on the slums. "Some of these people get their vegetables from the waste-barrel," Schwab wrote. (In the matter of bookbinders turning anarchist, Henry James had it right: industrialization may have left such craftsmen particularly bitter.) In 1884, the Saturday edition serialized Zola's "Germinal," in which an anarchist sabotages a coal mine and then stalks off like a melancholy super-villain into "the unknown, calmly going to deal destruction wherever dynamite could be found to blow up cities and men."

The anarchists were indeed fond of dynamite, then a recent invention. Its main ingredient, nitroglycerin, had been around since the eighteen-forties, but not until Alfred Nobel found a way to stabilize it, by mixing it with an inert filler, did it become safe enough for widespread use—including use by amateurs with a cause. "Dynamite is the diffusion of power," Parsons explained at the trial. "It is democratic; it makes everybody equal." In 1884, his wife suggested that tramps who were thinking of drowning themselves should become suicide bombers instead. In 1885, the *Alarm* published a letter from a professor in New York explaining that "if you carry two or three pounds with you people will respect you much more than if you carried a pistol." Avrich thought that the letter gave Conrad the idea for a character in "The Secret Agent," an anarchist professor who never leaves his house without "the supreme guarantee of his sinister freedom"—enough dynamite to blow up himself and any policeman who might try to arrest him. In New York, Johann Most, another bookbinder, wrote a series of how-to articles on explosives, which the Chicago anarchists sold as a pamphlet. Under a false name, Most took a job in an explosives factory in New Jersey, and he may have shipped some dynamite to Spies. No such shipment was ever found, but Spies did keep empty bombshells on his desk, in order to impress reporters from the mainstream press.

When Parsons said at the trial that he had never had any dynamite and had never used any, he was no doubt telling the truth. But he lied when he said he had never recommended force. The only question is *how* he and the other anarchists meant what they said. Some seem to have been willing to go further than others. The two defendants who belonged to a militant faction—Fischer, a wispy-bearded typesetter, and Engel, who ran a toy store with his wife and daughter and is described by Green as resembling "an ingratiating waiter in a *Wursthaus*"—thought the war against capitalism imminent and the workers' need for firepower urgent. Also dangerous was the twenty-two-year-old Lingg, a recent immigrant who spoke little English and was a loner. Like James's Hyacinth Robinson, he was rumored to be the bastard of a nobleman, probably because his delicate features and

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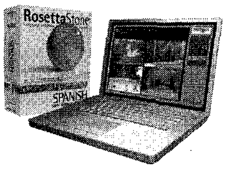

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peach-and-white complexion seemed too fine for a carpenter. At the trial, he defied the judge, saying, "I despise you. I despise your order, your laws, your force-propped authority. Hang me for it!" As he himself admitted, he spent the afternoon of the Haymarket riot making and distributing about forty bombs.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, most workers faced sixty-hour weeks, including a full Saturday. Transit workers put in at least eighty-four hours, and some bakers as many as a hundred and twenty. Laws regulating the workday were toothless. A movement to reduce the workday to eight hours was launched as the Civil War was ending. Advocates believed that shorter workdays would mean more jobs, that more jobs would spur consumer spending, that increased leisure would lead to a healthier and more educated workforce, and that all the blundering cyclicality of the economy would vanish. Momentum built slowly, but in 1886 workers at rallies sang: "We want to feel the sunshine / We want to smell the flowers; / We're sure God has willed it. / And we mean to have eight hours." The enthusiasm nearly caught the anarchists by surprise. Parsons had been for the eight-hour day in the early eighteen-eighties but against it in 1885, thinking it a distraction from the main event—revolution. He went for it again in early 1886, when he saw how badly workers wanted it.

On Saturday, May 1, 1886, with thirty thousand to forty thousand Chicagoans on strike, Parsons and his wife led eighty thousand people through the city, in one of the world's first May Day parades. On Monday, May 3rd, Spies spoke about the eight-hour day to a group of German and Czech lumber shovers. As he was finishing, a bell sounded the end of the workday a few blocks away at the McCormick Reaper Works, which had recently locked out its striking workers and hired strikebreakers. A few hundred men left Spies's talk and headed toward the McCormick factory, where they threw stones at the scabs. The police responded with gunfire, killing at least one striker and wounding several more. In a rage, Spies returned to his office and wrote a flyer in both English and German calling the people to arms: "Rise in your might, Hercules, and destroy the hideous monster that seeks to destroy you." A typesetter headlined the flyer "REVENGE!" in boldface, and more than a thousand copies were dropped throughout the city that night.

That evening, Engel, Fischer, and other militants met in a saloon on West Lake Street, having been summoned by the appearance of the code letter "Y" in the letters column of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. At a previous meeting, they had discussed the logistics of seizing the city when the revolution came, and now they decided that the code word *Ruhe* (German for "quiet") would be the signal of its advent. As a response to the violence at the McCormick factory, they also scheduled a protest in the Haymarket for the following night.

The next morning, Tuesday, May 4th, Fischer had flyers printed announcing the Haymarket protest. Spies agreed to speak at the rally, but only if a provocative line was deleted from the flyer: "Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force." Fischer sent a man back to the print shop to strike the words, but a few hundred flyers had already been printed and may have been distributed along with the edited ones. Spies was less cautious in his column for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* that afternoon; he wrote that he was sorry the workers at McCormick's hadn't had dynamite with them the day before. Someone asked him to print the word *Ruhe* in the letters column, and he did, but without knowing what it meant. When he found out, he sent a messenger to tell the militant factions that it had been printed by mistake and that no one needed to prepare for a showdown.

Spies showed up at the Haymarket forty-five minutes late, because speeches in German usually came after speeches in English. He found the crowd small—only a couple of thousand people—and the meeting unbegun. Parsons had just got back that morning from a rally in Cincinnati and had made other plans. Spies moved the group to a side street, climbed onto a truck wagon, and gamely spoke in English while someone fetched Parsons, who arrived with his wife and children and took over. Chicago's mayor stood in the crowd, conspicuously smoking a cigar. He judged the meeting "tame" and said so to Inspector John Bonfield, who had massed six companies of police at a station nearby. After the mayor went home, Fielden rose to speak. It began to rain. Parsons, his family, and Fischer took shelter in a nearby saloon; most of the crowd went home. At this point, of the Haymarket eight only Spies and Fielden were still on the scene. Schwab had left earlier, to speak at a meeting in another part of town. Lingg was delivering his bombs to a saloon on the North Side, more than two miles away; he didn't know about the Haymarket meeting. Neebe didn't know about it, either, and Engel was at home drinking beer with his wife.

Perhaps to hold the dwindling crowd's attention, Fielden darkened his rhetoric. "The law is your enemy," he said. "Keep your eye upon it, throttle it, kill it, stab it, do everything you can to wound it—to impede its progress." Two detectives ran to Inspector Bonfield to report the change in tone, and the police rushed up just as Fielden was concluding. A captain commanded the anarchists to disperse. "We are peaceable," Fielden answered, and began to step down from the wagon. This was the moment that someone lobbed the bomb. According to a report in the Chicago *Tribune* of May 5th:

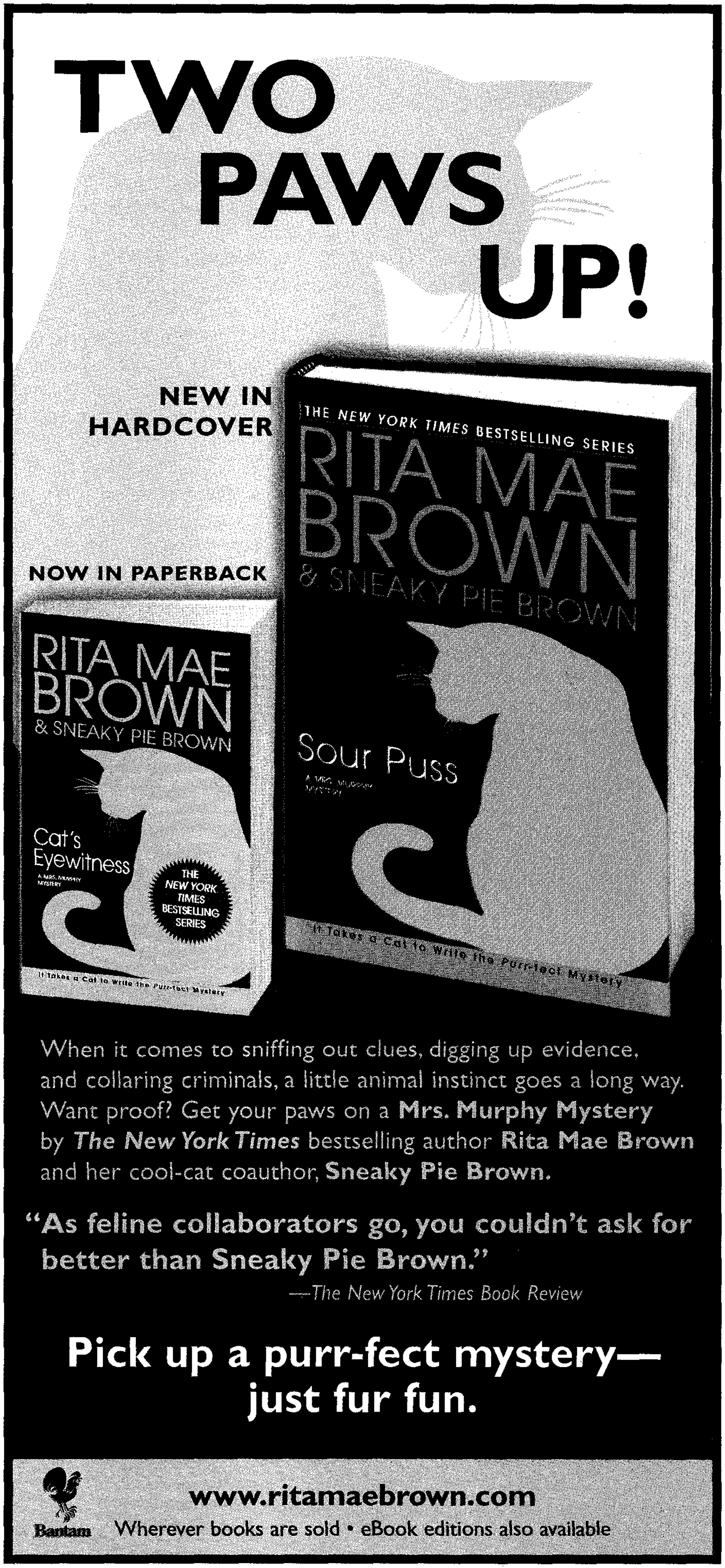
> It rose about twenty feet in the air, describing a curve, and fell right in the middle of the street and among the marching police. It gave a red glare while in the air. The bomb lay on the ground a few seconds, then a loud explosion occurred, and the crowd took to their heels, scattering in all directions. Immediately after the explosion the police pulled their revolvers and fired on the crowd. An incessant fire was kept up for nearly two minutes, and at least 250 shots were fired.

One police officer died immediately, six more in the next few weeks. Bullets, not bomb shrapnel, killed most of them, probably because they were hit by friendly fire in the shooting that followed, in which at least four protesters also died. The police claimed, however, that the anarchists had started shooting the moment the bomb went off, and the newspapers soon adopted this story.

Parsons fled. He washed out of his hair the black shoe polish he ordinarily dyed it with, shaved his mustache, and waited incognito in Wisconsin for a month and a half. For a brief, exciting moment, he thought that the revolution had at last arrived.

The newspapers called for a lynching. "There are no good anarchists except dead anarchists," wrote the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*. "Why should the dynamite knights be allowed to exercise the rights of free citizens?" the Chicago *Tribune* asked, and the New York *Times* prescribed hemp. A theatre manager in Chicago offered to hang an anarchist nightly as part of his show. The color red disappeared from street advertising, and the police went so far as to confiscate red pillowcases. They also opened mail, shut down newspapers, and searched homes without warrants. They beat witnesses who wouldn't coöperate and paid the rent of those who did.

The anarchists' chief lawyer, a somewhat idealistic veteran of the Civil War, was sure he could prove Parsons's innocence, and thought that Parsons would



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win public sympathy if he turned himself in. Eager to return to the spotlight, Parsons did—an awful miscalculation. Before he could officially surrender, the state's attorney spotted him in the courtroom and asked the sheriff to seize him, spoiling the effect. As jury selection began, the defense team realized what they were up against. The judge, Joseph E. Gary, refused to allow the defense to challenge for cause prospective jurors who had already formed a settled opinion of the defendants' guilt. He even refused to dismiss a relative of one of the policemen who was killed. The defense ended up with a juror who said that after reading the newspapers "my mind was made up," one who said that "I have an opinion in my own mind that the defendants encouraged the throwing of that bomb," and one who believed that since the defendants were being tried they were probably guilty. But in Judge Gary's opinion, "For a man to say that he is prejudiced against horse thieves is no ground for imputing to him any misconduct as a juror." He evidently thought that prejudice against anarchists was just as innocuous.

The government's star witnesses lied carelessly. A man named M. M. Thompson, who worked in the hosiery department of Marshall Field, swore that he had followed Spies and Schwab into an alley, where he overheard the words "pistols" and "police" and the question "Do you think one is enough, or hadn't we better go and get more?" But Schwab did not stay at the Haymarket long enough to talk to Spies. Furthermore, Thompson understood no German, and Spies and Schwab didn't speak English to each other in private conversation. Another witness, Harry L. Gilmer, claimed to have seen Spies light the bomb, but a Chicago *Times* reporter testified that he had heard Gilmer tell the story very differently, and ten neighbors and close associates swore that Gilmer was not to be trusted.

The defense easily discredited this testimony, but it didn't matter. With Judge Gary's approval, the prosecution asserted that it did not need to prove who had thrown the bomb. Merely by virtue of what the Haymarket eight had said and written about anarchism and dynamite, they were guilty of conspiracy to commit murder. As Judge Gary explained in an 1893 article defending his handling of the trial, "They incited, advised, encouraged the throwing of the bomb that killed the policemen, not by addressing the bomb-thrower specially, and telling him to throw a bomb at that or any specified time or occasion, but by general addresses to readers and hearers."

Green writes in a lengthy footnote that he prefers not to read the Haymarket story under the shadow of 9/11, but he is nonetheless acute in observing the role played in the case by reactionary sentimentality. The defense attorneys, he points out, probably alienated the jury when they said that the police were "not heroes, but knaves," and when they called Jesus "the great Socialist of Judea." The police may have panicked and lied, and Jesus may have said that he came with a sword to overturn all the old laws and may even have taken a disconcerting interest in the poor, but it was no good saying so. The jury preferred the style of the prosecution, which displayed dynamite paraphernalia and bloody police uniforms, and told the jury that it was up to them to decide "whether the day of civilization shall go down into the night of barbarism."

The prosecution anticipated getting the death penalty for only four defendants—Spies, Fischer, Engel, and Lingg—and at least one lawyer on the prosecution's team thought the evidence against Neebe too slight to convict him. But after less than three hours of deliberation, the jurors convicted all eight defendants and condemned to death all but Neebe. Schwab's wife screamed and fainted. With morbid humor, Parsons, who was standing at a window, took the cord of the blinds and made a noose, to signal the verdict to the crowd outside. They cheered.

Illinois's Supreme Court upheld the verdict, and the U.S. Supreme Court saw no federal question that justified its intervention. On November 10, 1887, the day before the hangings were due to take place, Lingg killed himself in his cell, by putting a cigar-size bomb in his mouth and lighting it. It had probably been smuggled to him by a bookbinder named Dyer Lum, a hot-tempered intellectual whose précis of the trial had helped convince William Dean Howells of its injustice. A few hours later, the governor of Illinois commuted the sentences of Fielden and Schwab to life imprisonment. He thought he could risk showing them mercy, after Judge Gary sent a letter describing Fielden as "more a misguided enthusiast than a criminal" and the state's attorney sent one praising Schwab's behavior in the courtroom as "decorous" and "respectful." The governor was said to have wished to commute Parsons's sentence, too, but Parsons had refused to ask for clemency. Instead, he had suggested that Illinois ought to hang his wife and children with him, since by attending the Haymarket meeting they had contributed exactly as much toward the bombing as he had.

On the morning of November 11th, Parsons, Spies, Fischer, and Engel sang the "Workers' Marseillaise" together. At noon, they were hanged, in white shrouds and hoods. Because they did not fall far enough to break their necks, all four died slowly, by strangulation. "The men are dead," Howells wrote, in a letter he probably did not send. "They are with God, as the simple, devout old phrase goes; or if the scientific spirit of the age does not consent to this idea, I will say that they are at least not with the newspapers."

During the appeals process, public opinion had begun to shift, and after the anarchists died they became martyrs in some circles. More Chicagoans watched their funeral procession than had Lincoln's. Nonetheless, when a later governor of Illinois, John Peter Altgeld, pardoned the three defendants still alive, in 1893, he jeopardized his political career. What Altgeld had read in the two-million-word transcript of the trial enraged him, and his pardoning statement is strong and fine-edged. He argues that if you want to claim that a violent speech has made a person guilty of someone else's violent act, you must at least prove that the actor heard the speech or read it. "Until the State proves from whose hands the bomb came, it is impossible to show any connection between the man who threw it and these defendants."

No one ever proved that. A candymaker named John Bernett did see the bomb thrower. "He just took the bomb like this and threw it up," Bernett told the courtroom, miming the action, but he could add only that the man had a mustache, stood about five feet nine, and did not resemble any of the suspects. After reviewing the evidence, the historian Henry David thought it likely that the bomber was an anarchist—someone "cut out in Lingg's pattern." Indeed, Lum claimed that the bomber was someone who had deliberately ignored Spies's message about the mistaken printing of *Ruhe*. In 1986, Paul Avrich nominated George Meng, a Chicago teamster and militant anarchist, whose family had preserved the secret that "he was the one."

Although there's no reason to think Lingg conspired with the bomber, he may have made the bomb. It was Lingg's technique to fasten the two half-globes of his bombs together with nuts and bolts. The morning after the Haymarket explosion, a surgeon removed a nut from the rear end of a tailor, and when the Illinois Supreme Court reviewed the case on appeal, the Justices wrote that the nut screwed onto one of Lingg's bolts exactly. In 2003, researchers re-tested surviving metal samples with energy-dispersive X-ray spectrometry. The results suggest that the chemists who tested the metal in 1886 were competent and honest. Shrapnel taken from one policeman's body nearly matches what the 1886 chemists found in several bombs allegedly made by Lingg but now missing. The ratio of tin to lead in a surviving bomb is higher, but not by much. The researchers add an intriguing speculation: did the anarchists melt down type to make the casings of their bombs? If so, they suggest, "it would have been the literal transformation of their words into deeds." As it happens, the same idea occurred to the Chicago police. The day after the bombing, they ransacked the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* print shop "like vandals," seizing "old type and stereotype" as bomb components, according to an anarchist who fled the country. The prosecution didn't mention the theory at the trial. Perhaps they thought better of it; after all, their own chemists testified that the bombs were unlike any alloy commercially available. Besides, they didn't need to show in such concrete detail how ideas turned into crimes. They were safe leaving that to the jury's imagination. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

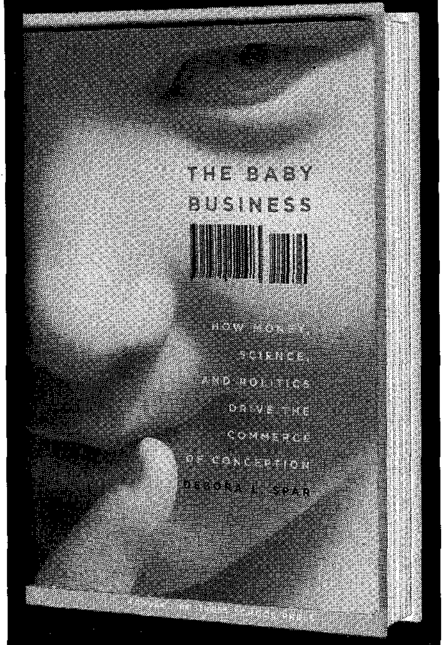
The Last of Her Kind, *by Sigrid Nunez (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* Nunez's ruthlessly observed portrait of countercultural America in the sixties and seventies opens in 1968, when two girls meet as roommates at Barnard College. Ann is rich and white and wants to be neither, confiding, "I wish I had been born poor"; Georgette has no illusions about poverty, having just escaped her depressed home town, where "whole families drank themselves to disgrace." Georgette finds Ann at once despicable and mesmerizing, and she's stunned—if not entirely surprised—when, years after the end of their friendship, Ann is arrested for killing a cop. In previous works, Nunez has proved herself a master of psychological acuity. Here her ambitions are grander, and the result is a remarkable and disconcerting vision of a troubled time in American history, and of its repercussions for national and individual identity.

The House of Scorta, *by Laurent Gaudé, translated from the French by Stephen Sartarelli and Sophie Hawkes (MacAdam/Cage; $23).* This slender chronicle of a southern Italian family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries won France's Goncourt Prize. The family patriarch is a bandit who rapes a village woman and is stoned to death; his (rather willing) victim dies soon after childbirth. Their son becomes an infamous and wealthy outlaw, whose three children, left penniless when he bequeaths all his money to the Church, strive to reëstablish their name and their fortune. The already operatic story line is embellished with grandiose flourishes—burning desire that leads to an actual fire, guilt that gnaws until its sufferer starves to death—but, happily, it is also underpinned by a deeper concern with sacrifice and redemption.

Better for All the World, *by Harry Bruinius (Knopf; $30).* In 1927, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of sterilizing a twenty-one-year-old woman thought to be "feebleminded," and Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote for the majority, "It is better for all the world, if . . . society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind." This precedent led to the escalation of eugenics in the United States, and the coercive sterilization of more than sixty-five thousand people (many of whom were poor women). Bruinius deftly combines analysis of how the American quest for moral and social purity prepared people to accept pseudo-science as a basis for national policy with an account of the personal and intellectual development of eugenics' most influential American advocates—Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin. Both from religious families, they wanted to "retranslate" Puritan ethics into scientific practice, and aimed at "tracing the genetic roots of 'sin.' "

The Ice Museum, *by Joanna Kavenna (Viking; $24.95).* In this historical travelogue, Kavenna sets out in search of the quasi-mythical land of Thule, which the Greek explorer Pytheas, in the fourth century B.C., claimed to have reached by sailing north for six days from Britain, then the boundary of the known world. In the following centuries, Arctic voyagers christened each successive discovery—from Shetland and Norway to Svalbard—Thule. But the word also became synonymous with the idea of the far north, a "blank white space" to be filled with fears and fantasies of the unknown. For the Romans, who believed that nothing was out of their reach, it was the farthest outpost of their empire; for the Victorians, it was Poe's "wild weird clime"; and for certain Nazis it was a lost Aryan homeland. As she travels, Kavenna ponders the two millennia in which the myth thrived, a time before the entire globe was mapped, and when "its edges were vague, falling into shadows."

are we selling babies?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THE ART WORLD

MODERN MAN

Edvard Munch at MOMA.

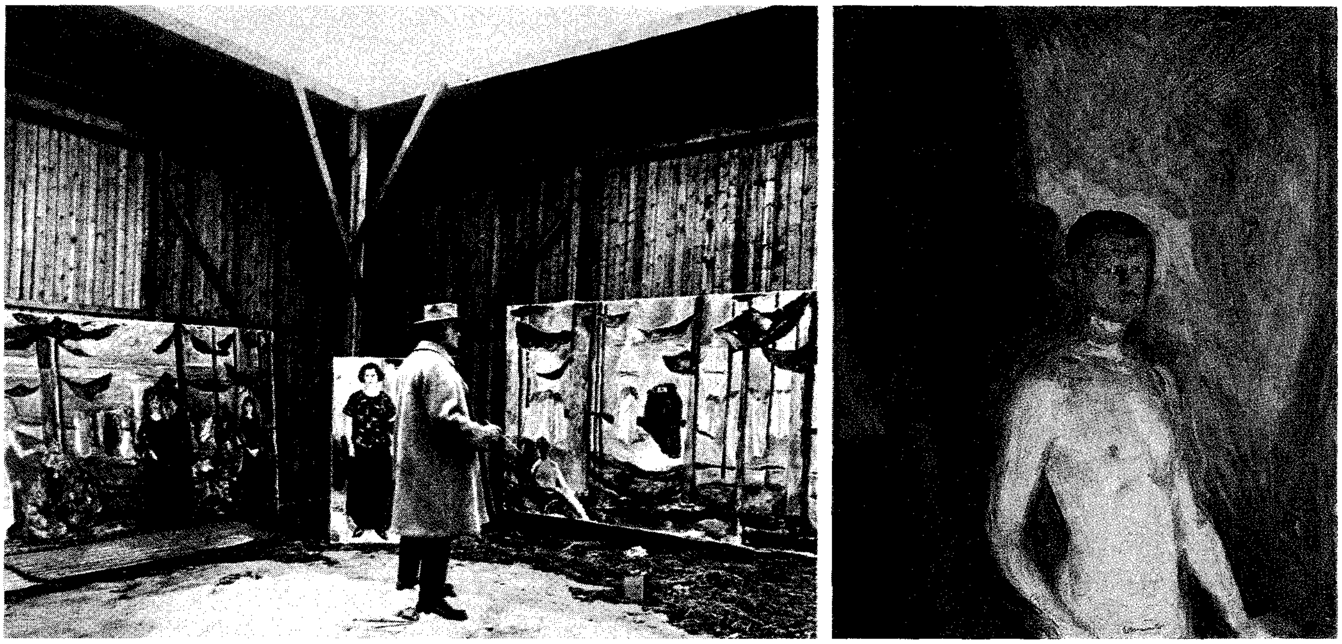
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

When he was seven years old, in 1870 or 1871, Edvard Munch used a lump of coal to draw a sprawling procession of blind men across the floor of his home in Kristiania—as Swedish-ruled Oslo was then named—one in a series of squalid flats taken by a family prone to poverty, disease, mental disorder, and death. His mother had died of tuberculosis when he was five; his fiercely beloved older sister Sophie would do the same when he was thirteen. Another sister would be lost to psychosis. Munch himself was sickly from birth; he said later that he grew up feeling "like a boat built of hopeless material, of old rotten wood." His father was a military doctor, at a time when doctors were ill-paid and little respected, and a guilt-ravaged religious zealot whose idea of parental duty was to instill the terrors of Hell in his children. The boy's drawing expressed an alarmed fascination with anonymous crowds on city streets—a theme that would appear in major paintings he made some twenty years later. According to Sue Prideaux's assured and vivid recent biography, "Edvard Munch: Behind the Scream" (Yale), Munch's Aunt Karen, the family's mainstay, marvelled at "the trembling uncertainty" that the apparent prodigy had caught in the sightless figures. (As Munch matured, his talent was regularly noted—even as his art was loathed and his character deplored—in Norway.) In later years, Munch recalled "deriving such pleasure from the monumental format of my work, real satisfaction at the sensation of my hand so much more actively involved than when I drew on the back of father's prescriptions."

Two things impress me about this story. First, I believe it, despite its redolence of the sort of family lore that mythifies everybody's childhood and abounds in the hagiographies of genius. No other great artist—and only a rare writer, short of Proust—has made so absolute a principle of truthful memory. (A perceptive German critic, in 1902, characterized Munch as "a Romantic who cannot lie.") Second, I'm struck by the note of discovered joy in artmaking, never mind the direness of the subject, that may be typical of budding artists but would serve this one to an extreme degree, as an emotional tightrope over the abysses of a life that was otherwise pretty thoroughly awful.

"Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul," at the Museum of Modern Art, is the second comprehensive Munch retrospective in the United States in the past fifty years. The first, at the National Gallery, in 1978, came as a revelation to observers who had not previously visited Norway, where all but a few of Munch's paintings reside. (The Boston Museum of Fine Arts' "Summer Night's Dream (The Voice)," from 1893, is the only American-owned painting from his magnum opus, the series of pictures on themes of love, anxiety, and death which is commonly termed the "Frieze of Life.") He was known here as a great printmaker—the most original of the Symbolist era—and, vaguely, as the father of German Expressionism. But reproductions of his work, including the already famous "Scream," prepared no one for the originals' astringent textures, dense space, tensile drawing, and eloquent color.

That show revolutionized my sense of modern-art history, particularly of its canonical elevation of the quartet of Post-Impressionism: Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Seurat. Munch, though younger than those masters, and hitting his stride a bit later, suddenly seemed to me their peer in giving form to the seismic forces of European modernity. He still does, both despite and because of a radically impure style that, at its best, varies from picture to picture. His strongest works, dating from about 1890 to the early years of the last century, exalted pictorial functions—narrative and illustration—that were being combed out of modern painting as specialties more proper to literature and the popular arts. Thereafter, until his death, in 1944, Munch, with less to say of life, painted mainly just to paint, with so-so results, except for the occasional, jolting self-portrait. As a happy compensation for being so long marginalized, and at a time of resurgent interest in storytelling among young artists, Munch today appears fresh and challenging in ways that his more honored peers may not.



Munch working in his outdoor studio near Kristiania, Norway, and his "Self-Portrait in Hell" (1903).

GRANGER COLLECTION; MUNCH MUSEUM/MUNCH-ELLINGSEN GROUP/ARS, NY

French painting (Gauguin and van Gogh), Scandinavian theatre (Ibsen and Strindberg), and German philosophy (Nietzsche) shaped Munch's emerging sensibility as he moved through the bohemian scene in Kristiania, with some agonizing experiments in free love, and on to art school in Paris, under the academic realist Léon Bonnat, and to scandal in Berlin, where, in 1892, his first major exhibition was denounced by Kaiser Wilhelm II and promptly shut down. Munch's first successful works were interiors and portraits that strained against the genteel conventions of naturalism. The MOMA show includes a regrettably later version, from 1896, of "The Sick Child" (1886), a torturous reminiscence of Sophie on her deathbed, in which Munch struggled toward a new pictorial language. In the ravishing "Summer Night/Inger on the Beach" (1889) seaside rocks seem to pulse with incipient life. After experimenting with semi-Pointillist Impressionism in Paris, he painted, upon learning of his father's death, "Night in St. Cloud" (1890), which shows a top-hatted man in silhouette, sitting at a window and smoking, in variously inky and luminous blues. It is a ticking bomb of suppressed feeling.

Munch became Munch with his allegories of love. "The Voice," presenting a seductive woman in white in the seaside woods, backlit by a low summer-night sun, memorializes the onset of his first love. "Ashes" (1894) is about the affair's end. Postcoital, the same woman, in perhaps the same woods, dispassionately tidies her hair, as a male figure huddles dejectedly. "Madonna" displays a woman during intercourse as seen by her lover, for whom plainly she cares nothing. Not all of Munch's many relationships with women ended badly, by the way; some were casual. But any real attachment foretold disaster—in the worst case, a tussle over a gun that went off, shattering the middle finger of Munch's left hand.

"The Scream" (1893) is keenly missed. Its absence from the show, except as an image in prints, produces the effect of an opera minus its soprano. I mean the original "Scream," a delicate and raw marvel in oil, pastel, and casein on cardboard, which hangs in Norway's National Gallery, not the inferior remake (one of three, none of them quite right) that was stolen from the Munch Museum. Standing in for it at MOMA is "Despair" (1892), his first representation—with a faceless and inert foreground figure under a seething blood-red sky—of a ghastly epiphany ("I felt a scream penetrating nature") that he had had years earlier on a road outside Kristiania. The flayed and writhing homunculus of "The Scream" came to him from nowhere, unprecedented in any art and without an equivalent in his own, apart from the merged faces of the lovers in his paintings and prints called "The Kiss." Munch avoided representing unreality. With no use for the supernatural, he was a stony skeptic in circles of spiritualist friends. The power of "The Scream," I think, owes much to an intellectual resistance that it overcame in the artist. A similar resistance explains the popular tendency to treat that icon of unhappy modern consciousness as a joke in cartoons and inflatable toys. Laughter dies in the face of the supremely matter-of-fact original. It is the touchstone of Munch's definitive quality in his great years: a self-abnegating submission to emotional truth. "If only one could be the body through which today's thoughts and feelings flow," he wrote in 1892. He became that body intermittently, at a cost of becoming almost nothing in his own person. Study his self-portraits. What is uncanny in them is narcissism turned inside out, giving itself away. ♦

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THE THEATRE

BLOOD SIMPLE

Martin McDonagh's "Lieutenant of Inishmore."

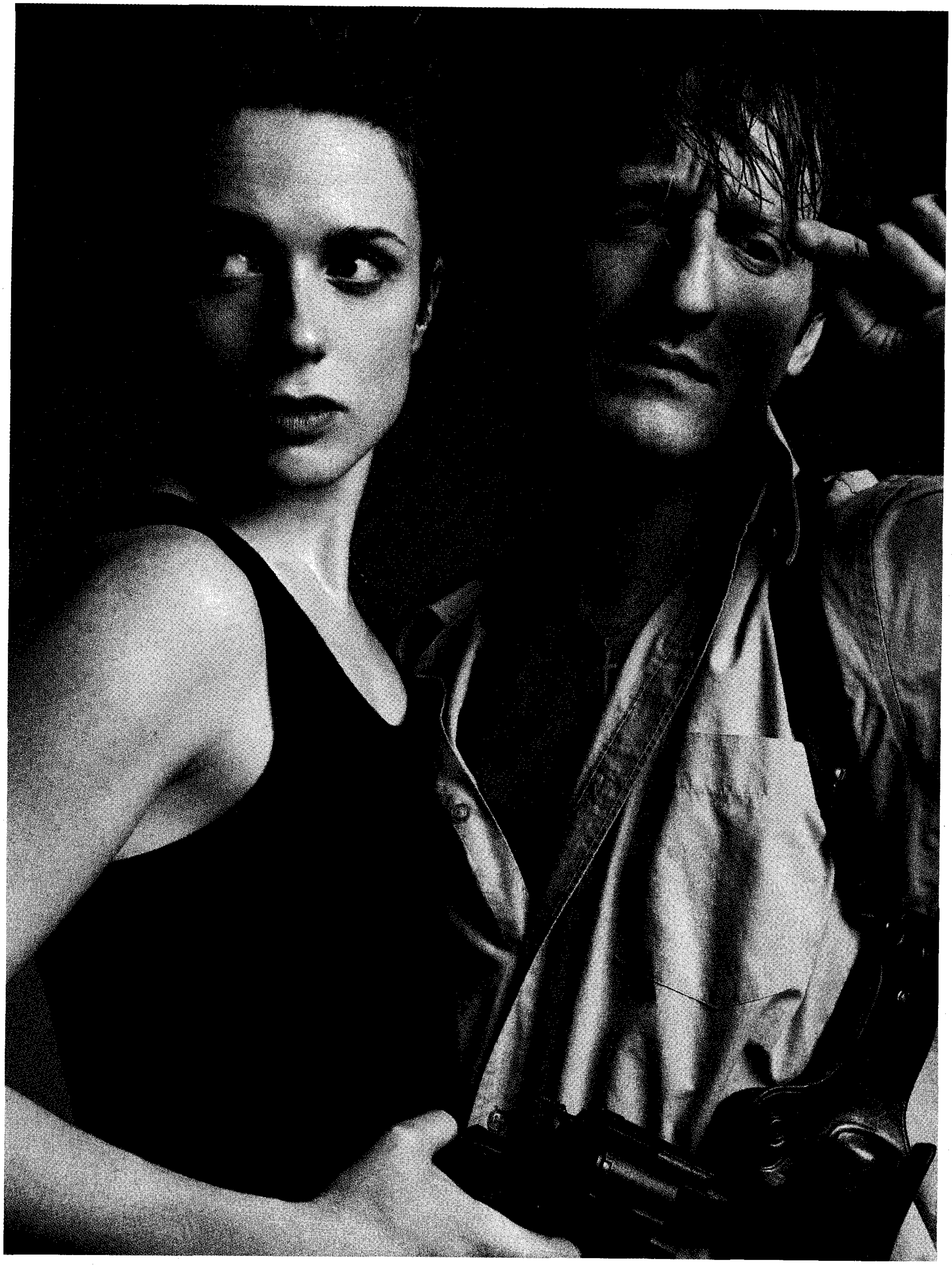
BY JOHN LAHR

The grotesque is a formidable literary strategy. Flannery O'Connor explained it this way: "To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures." The louts and lunatics who inhabit Martin McDonagh's "The Lieutenant of Inishmore" (which is having its American première at the Atlantic Theatre Company, under the firm-handed direction of Wilson Milam) are just such gruesome and unforgettable figures; as all gargoyles do, they inspire an almost childish terror and elation in the audience. Like McDonagh's earlier, similarly gleeful and macabre yarns—"The Beauty Queen of Leenane," "The Cripple of Inishmaan," and "The Lonesome West"—"The Lieutenant of Inishmore" is a sort of cautionary fairy tale for our toxic times. In its horror and hilarity, it works as an act of both revenge and repair, turning the tables on grief and goonery, and forcing the audience to think about the unthinkable.

McDonagh sets his ghoulish satire in 1993, during the Troubles—the euphemism for Northern Ireland's sectarian strife—in an Aran Island cottage as threadbare as the surrounding terrain is inhospitable. The curtain comes up on two men—Donny (Peter Gerety), the middle-aged owner of the house, and a ponytailed teen-ager called Davey (Domhnall Gleeson)—discussing a cat that is lying on the kitchen table with half of its head missing. "Do you think he's dead, Donny?" is the play's exquisitely dopey opening line. We are clearly in the world of what psychiatrists call "negative hallucination," where people can't see what's right under their noses. We are also in the world of Grand Guignol. Donny picks up the limp cat—Wee Thomas, as he's called—and, according to the stage directions, "bits of its brain plop out." "He might be in a coma," Davey says. "Would we ring the vet?" Unfortunately, the person they really have to ring is Donny's son, the infamous terrorist Padraic (David Wilmot), who is Wee Thomas's loving owner.

Padraic's reputation for carnage precedes him: he's so bloodthirsty that even the I.R.A. has refused him. "Sure, Padraic would kill you for sweating near him, let alone this," Davey says, dropping to his knees. McDonagh's two panic-stricken clowns grasp at any excuse to placate their likely executioner. Donny, on whose watch Padraic's cat has apparently died, needs an alibi; Davey, whose only crime was to retrieve the wounded animal, is blackmailed into a false confession. "If you admit it was you knocked poor Thomas down, Davey, I won't tell him," Donny says. "If you carry on that it wasn't, then I will." After Davey agrees to say that he killed the cat, Donny asks, "How?" "However you fecking want, sure!" Davey says. "I hit him with me bike, then I banged him with a rake, then I jumped up and down on the fecker." "You hit him with your bike, uh-huh, I suspected," Donny says. The absurd repartee signals the play's psychotic climate; it also shows off McDonagh's gift for the mechanics of the farcical. (The fluting, camp swagger of some of his lines echoes that of the British playwright Joe Orton, whose dark-comic blueprint McDonagh has adapted for his own subversive purposes.)

McDonagh's tactic is to keep the stakes simple: he forces his craven characters onto the horns of a clear-cut dilemma, then, as they slowly try to wriggle free, he stands back and relishes their panic and pain. He trusts the depth of his characters' folly and his own talent, pushing both to the limit. More often than not, he strikes funny. For instance, once Donny and Davey reach Padraic—he gets the news about his "sick" cat on his cell phone as he's about to remove the nipple of a drug dealer who has been



Kerry Condon and David Wilmot as the terrorist lovers Mairead and Padraic. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

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hung upside down from the ceiling—they have to get their story straight; they also have to get a substitute black cat. Inevitably, for two such dimwits, this is an almost insurmountable problem. Finding no black cat on the island, Davey grabs the orange tabby that belongs to his sister Mairead (Kerry Condon)—an act of sibling revenge on the trigger-happy air-gun-toting teen-age termagant, who, in a previous scene, took potshots at him and his bike. The stand-in cat's marmalade tail waves from the bag that Davey and Donny are holding it in as they drunkenly apply black shoe polish to its fur.

While Padraic is on his way home to nurse the animal who, according to his father, has been "his only friend for fifteen year," we learn that Wee Thomas was actually whacked as political payback by the local I.N.L.A.—three thugs with Northern Irish accents, who took issue with Padraic's having tortured a drug dealer whose kickbacks were subsidizing their mayhem. "What Padraic doesn't understand is it isn't only for the schoolkids and the oul fellas and the babes unborn we're out freeing Ireland," Christy (Andrew Connolly), one of the thugs, whose eye patch is a permanent reminder of Padraic's anarchy, says. "It's for the junkies, the thieves, and drug pushers, too." McDonagh has a field day sending up terrorist principles. Mairead, for instance, who is a kind of terrorist groupie, has already tried to earn her paramilitary spurs by shooting out the eyes of ten head of cattle, a daft gesture intended to damage the meat trade. "Who would want to buy a blind cow?" she says.

Act II isn't so much a bloodbath as a bloodfest. Padraic begins the spree by killing the substitute cat, whose fraudulence he discovers the second he pets it. Declaring himself a "tribunal," Padraic then administers his own form of rough justice. He chops off Davey's ponytail, then binds Davey's and Donny's hands and forces them onto their knees for execution. But, before killing them, Padraic insists on a confession. Donny claims to have an almost clean conscience. "Trampling on your mam all them times'll do for a start-off," Padraic suggests. That violence, his father pleads, took place a decade ago. Padraic shoots back, "There's no statute of limitations on mam trampling." Just then, Christy and his sidekicks enter, pulling their guns on Padraic. "Does the word 'splinter group' mean anything to you?" Christy says, when Padraic demands an explanation. " 'Splinter group'? 'Splinter group' 's two words," Padraic says. The two kneeling figures are now faced with a phalanx of five drawn guns pointed more or less in their direction; the scene works as a sort of Montana Shift of mayhem. "It's incidents like this does put tourists off Ireland," Donny says.

Soon, the cycle of violence kicks up to a whole new level of scenic absurdity. When Christy and his henchmen cart Padraic outside to kill him, they return bleeding from the eyes and screaming. The sound of air-rifle shots offstage tells us that Mairead has been at work. The men wedge themselves against the walls, firing wildly through bloodstained curtains at enemies they can't see. As they blast away, their targets—Mairead and Padraic—stroll past them, falling in love with each other's inner barbarian.

McDonagh bravely pushes ugliness to the extreme. As the river of blood becomes a sea, dripping down over the lip of the stage, Donny and Davey slowly saw up dead bodies in order to dispose of them. I counted three severed heads, six severed hands, and four amputated legs, one of which Davey uses to prop up a head he's laboring over. In McDonagh's universe, bloodletting is not a ritual of regeneration but a sign of brutalization. Padraic and Mairead separate from a passionate embrace to reveal that Mairead's yellow dress is badly stained. "You can't go walking the streets of Ulster dripping blood, now," Padraic says. "Sure, who would notice?" she responds, unwittingly condemning her benumbed homeland.

When, at the end of the play, a live black cat—Wee Thomas himself, back from his walkabout—hops through the window and heads for his food, he seems a startling emissary from the natural world, supremely indifferent to the madness and murderous blight of *Homo sapiens*. Davey and Donny are gobsmacked at the sight of him. All the loss of life, all the woe they've endured has been for nothing. "Four dead fellas, two dead cats . . . me hair style ruined!" Davey says. He adds, "That cat deserves shooting!" ♦

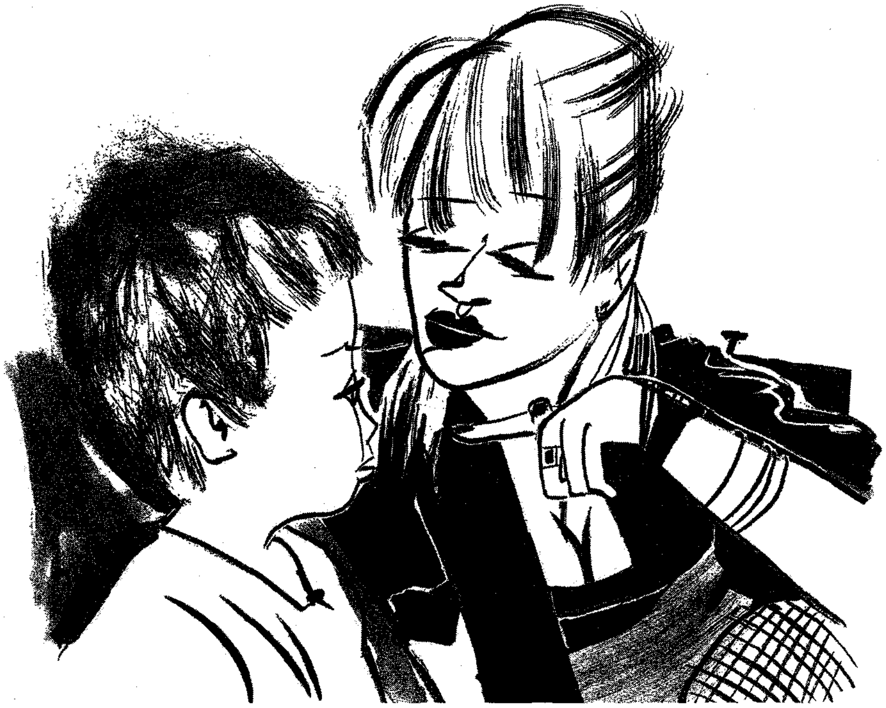
THE CURRENT CINEMA

TELLING TALES

"The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things," "Woman Is the Future of Man."

BY ANTHONY LANE

A movie called "The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things," directed by and starring Asia Argento, has been slouching around the festival circuit for a while. At last, it has earned a theatrical release, and, whether by design or by a thick slice of luck, the timing could not be sweeter. For the film is adapted, with surprising fidelity, from J. T. LeRoy's book of the same name, and right now there is much gnashing of teeth in the matter of J. T. LeRoy v. the Outraged Readers of America.

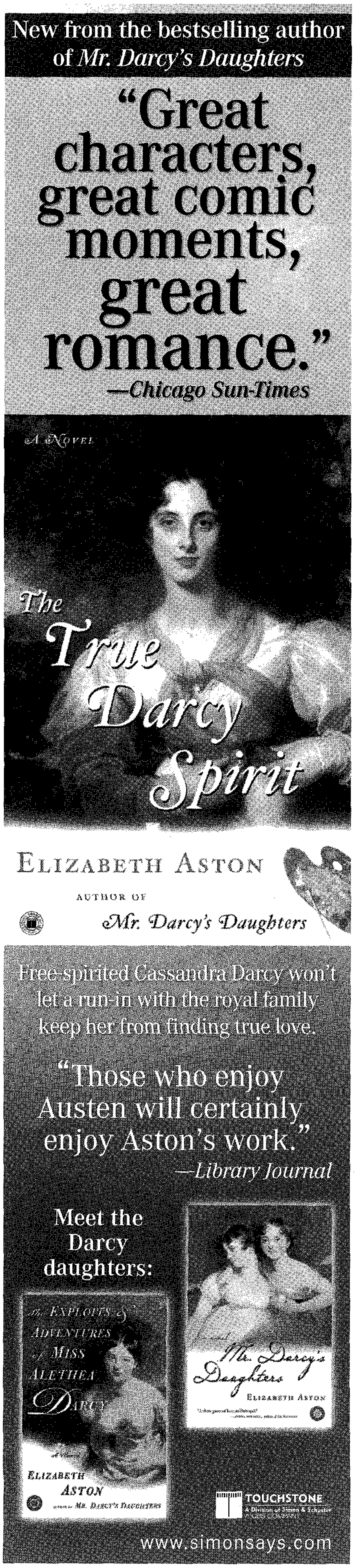


Asia Argento and Jimmy Bennett in the adaptation of J. T. LeRoy's book.

TOM BACHTELL

LeRoy's books deal in a trampy squalor and a kind of sawed-off lyricism that are, if nothing else, fiendishly à la mode. On no page of "The Heart Is Deceitful," a necklace of loosely linked stories published in 2001, did he claim that they were rooted in fact, but he was trading on the earnest pity of his readers, who have schooled themselves to revere the imprimatur of autobiography as the seal of genuine art. And now that worship has been thrown back in their faces by one revelation too many: J. T. LeRoy does not exist. His prose was apparently cooked up by a forty-year-old female writer named Laura Albert. His public appearances, in a Hitchcockian getup of shades, hat, and long blond hair, were performed by Savannah Knoop, the half sister of Albert's long-term partner, Geoffrey Knoop. In short, if you think the heart is deceitful, you should meet the author.

At this point, needless to say, my respect for J. T. LeRoy comes to life. He is just the hoax that the rage for confessional writing has been asking for. He, or she, has punched all the right buttons, telling of losers, abusers, cross-dressers, and crackpots, enabling eager readers to feel doubly validated in their response. (The announcement that James Frey, the author of the drink-sodden "A Million Little Pieces," also had the nerve to make stuff up is great news—a little



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more salt on the margarita's rim.) All I need now is to hear that Dave Pelzer is, in fact, an eighty-five-year-old Frenchwoman who collects fine china, and I will be a happy man.

The opening shots of the film tally with the first lines of the book. We see a toy bunny being waved in the camera's face, locking us into the point of view of our seven-year-old hero, Jeremiah (Jimmy Bennett). The toy has been bought by his mother, Sarah (Asia Argento), who has retrieved him from his foster parents. The harshness of the change is at once traumatic, keenly detailed, and not quite right. The boy goes from a loving home, filled with possessions, to a half-empty apartment and a paper plate swimming with cold Spaghetti-O's. His mother takes drugs and, we soon realize, turns tricks for a living, all of which makes one ask: would the Department of Social Services really deliver a child to such a blasted environment? Wrong decisions like this do occur every day, and yet, from the start, something about Jeremiah's descent into the underworld smells of literary conceit.

The rest of the film is a dutiful course in degradation, complete with a roster of villains as well established as those of any soap opera. Jeremiah, having run away, is swiftly returned to his mother's noxious embrace. She marries but skips out during the honeymoon, leaving Jeremiah to be raped by his stepfather. Just when you're wondering when the boy will meet a bunch of crazed Christian fundamentalists, he goes to live with his grandparents, who turn out to be crazed Christian fundamentalists. Once again, Sarah scoops him up, and, after a brief dip into Oedipal confusion, with the son dolled up to resemble his glossy-mouthed mother, we are ready for the exploding drug factory, the theft of half-eaten food from a Dumpster, and the open-ended finale in a hospital parking lot. If you fancy that all this can be achieved without a steady drip of cameo turns from cult performers (Peter Fonda, Winona Ryder, and a tattooed Marilyn Manson), you are much mistaken.

As an actress, Asia Argento has not advanced to a significant degree since her ballsy turn opposite Vin Diesel in "xXx." As a director, she has obviously studied at the feet of her father, Dario, whose Italian horror flicks, such as "Suspiria," are revered by scholars of hemoglobin. His work contrives to be both savage and languid, studded with pulsations of music and light; imagine getting a nosebleed in the middle of a disco, circa 1976, and you'll have some idea. "The Heart Is Deceitful" has its own proud peculiarities, such as the sticky red crows that flap through Jeremiah's dreams, but the whole enterprise heaves and strains with a sadistic overkill that even Dario might find too rich. His daughter has a tendency to play leapfrog with the narrative at the exact moment when it threatens to hold our interest; one moment Jeremiah is smarting beneath his grandfather's Bible-bashing regime, and the next, heralded by the words "Three Years Later," we see him (played from here on by Cole and Dylan Sprouse) preaching in the street, wearing a black suit and bashing a Bible of his own.

This is a shame, because when Argento does stop to consider the changes that humans slowly wreak on one another, as opposed to the sudden blows that they inflict, she can reach beyond the gross to a damaged sadness that many filmmakers would prefer not to ponder. What is awful about Jeremiah being beaten by one of his mother's admirers, for example, is not the deed itself, which the camera attends in gratuitous proximity, but the helpful air of acceptance with which, some time later, he offers a leather belt to the *next* man, fully expecting to be punished for his sins. As for the scene in which he sits in the car, at night, clawing firmly at his cheeks and replying, to his mother's inquiry, "I'm digging myself out," I hope never to watch it again.

That line is in the book, but LeRoy, who overwrites in the way that some people overdress, spoils it by strapping on an extra phrase: "I shout past the loud buzzing in my head, 'I'm digging myself out!' and watch clean, cold shafts of sun shadows rip into my flesh." This is what I think of as auto-gothic, and whether Laura Albert (if she was, indeed, the guilty party) meant it as a parody of fashionable angst or whether LeRoy's prose really was the best that she could muster is, in the end, beside the point. Her cover—the one indication of brilliance in the entire farcical business—has been blown for good, and if that stops a few weepy nineteen-year-olds from filling their blogs, or, worse still, their début novels, with first-person reports of the sun shadows that ripped into their flesh, so much the better. As for Asia Argento, she gets off lightly, for the simple reason that there is no such thing as a cinematic hoax. Even the worst movies are made in good faith, and, if you start condemning public figures for pretending to be something they're not, what do you do about actors? Who's going to tell Vin Diesel?

The core proposal of Hong Sang-soo's new movie, voiced by one of his characters over a restaurant table, runs as follows: "Koreans are too fond of sex. They have nothing better to do." Before you whip out your credit card and book a flight to Seoul, I should warn you that the landscape of desire, as laid out before Hong's unflustered gaze, could scarcely be further from an idyll. The movie is called "Woman Is the Future of Man," and one thing is for sure: if man is the past of woman, she must wish he would go away.

Munho (Yoo Jitae) is a college lecturer in art, and a living, chunky rebuttal of the notion that art refines the soul. Whether his moral conduct is less or more offensive than his choice of knitwear is something I have yet to resolve, and even his longtime friendship with Hunjoon (Kim Taewoo), a struggling filmmaker, seems pitted by tetchiness and tantrum. Yet they continue to meet for meals, and I guess that any kinship that can survive raw squid and four bottles of rice wine deserves to last. They are bound, too, by a mutual weakness for Sunhwa (Sung Hyunah); Hunjoon used to go out with her, and when he left for a trip to the United States, Munho stepped in. Now, with Hunjoon back in Korea and Munho safely married, they track her down once more.

This plain tale is made taxing by many things. Hong shuffles the time scheme, leaving us gasping to keep up. Some scenes appear to run not in sequence but, as it were, in parallel: we observe Munho alone, seated at the side of a sports arena, wrapped in a scarf; then we see him, bare-necked, approach a group of his students—same time, same place, same dazzle of sun and snow—and accept a scarf from *them*. How can both be true, except in reverie? The performances, in their flat placidity, give little away. Sunhwa, in particular, is a disconcerting blend of the pliable and the numb, and her query, mid-intercourse, to Munho—"Can I moan?"—may be the saddest indictment of another culture that I have ever heard. "Woman Is the Future of Man" is doomed to infuriate, and its scrutiny of disconnected beings, filmed in long, hold-your-breath takes, might feel like old hat to anyone reared on Antonioni, yet Hong has a grace and stealth of his own, and his scenes tend to tilt in directions that few of us would dare to predict. As for Munho's frowning complaint that Hunjoon mistreated his wife—"You hugged her, American style"—why not try it in the comfort of your own home? ♦

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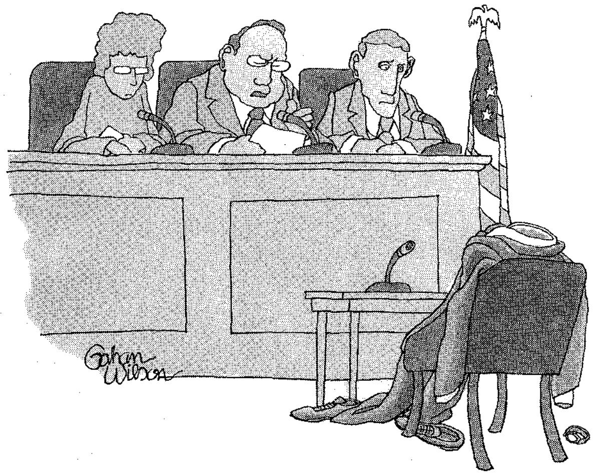
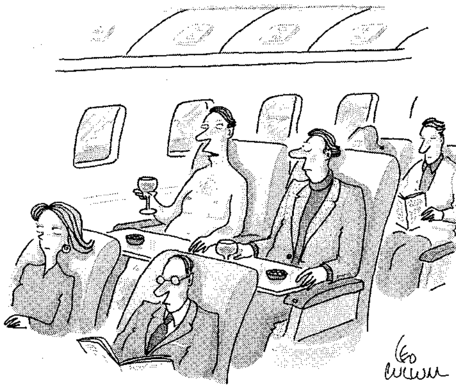
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Frank Cotham, must be received by Sunday, March 12th. Finalists in the February 27th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 27th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Are you now, or have you ever been?"
Stuart Spitalnic, Saunderstown, R.I.



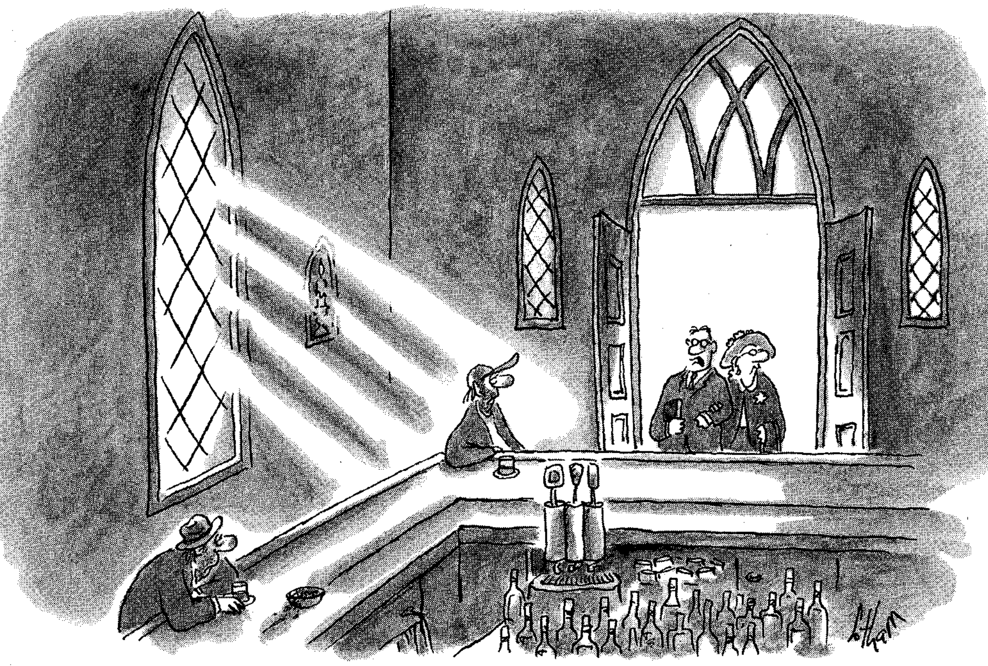
THE FINALISTS

"I only bring clothes that I definitely need."
Ken Mako, Stevenson, Conn.

"They give me free drinks if I keep my tray table down."
Jay Cassidy, Los Angeles, Calif.

"I'm sure I've got a business card on me somewhere."
Gil Flores, Atlantic Beach, Fla.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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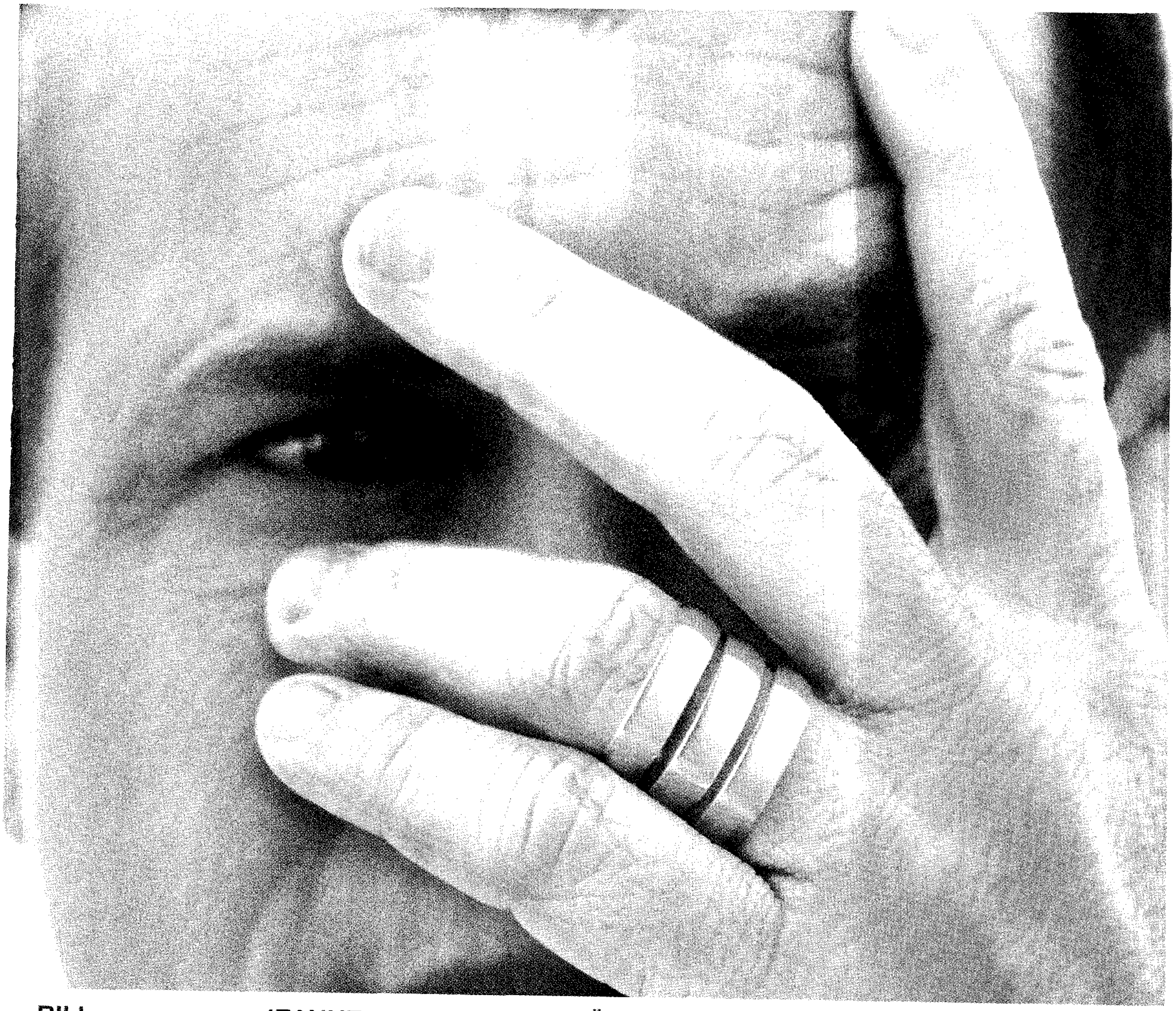

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